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## A Case of Arts Coordination in a Rural School District: A Distributed Perspective

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A CASE OF ARTS COORDINATION IN A RURAL SCHOOL DISTRICT:  
A DISTRIBUTED PERSPECTIVE

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Graduate School of  
Clemson University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Educational Leadership

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by  
Anna Shealy Wages  
December 2019

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Accepted by:  
Dr. Hans W. Klar, Committee Chair  
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## ABSTRACT

Though researchers have demonstrated the benefit of prolonged engagement in the arts (Catterall, Dumais, & Hapden-Thompson, 2012) school districts struggle to maintain high quality programs. Rural programs, in particular, are faced with unique challenges to providing arts programs (Donovan & Brown, 2017). Despite these challenges, some rural school districts have succeeded in providing quality programs, which are more in line with more resourced urban districts. Arts researchers (Bodilly, Augustine, & Zakaras, 2008) have found that arts coordination is a strategy to increase access to and the quality of an arts program. Further, districts of quality, even small ones, have arts coordinators (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999). Yet, arts coordination is not well defined in the literature and has not been the focus of any rural study. In this research, a single case study was utilized to examine how one rural school district coordinated the leadership of its arts program using distributed leadership. In particular, the research focused on how different levels of leadership from the district to the teachers were involved and the roles they played in arts coordination. The study also examined what impact arts coordination had on the quality of the program and its connection to the community.

The results of the study suggest that a rural school district should implement distributed leadership in order to coordinate its arts program and impact its quality and connection to the community. Rural districts should consider a multi-level approach to distributing leadership while considering their own context. This study provides a baseline for further research on rural arts coordination.

## DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to my parents, Ed and Ruth Shealy. They have provided continuous love and support in my educational journey.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation was made possible by the efforts of many people. I gratefully acknowledge their support and encouragement as I pursued this degree. First, I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Hans Klar, for his guidance and support. I would also like to thank the other members of my committee, Dr. Daniella Hall, Dr. Alison Leonard, and Dr. Lee D’Andrea, who brought a diversity of talents and perspectives to the table. I am also thankful for the members of my doctoral cohort. We truly became a family of learners. Lastly, I am thankful for the love and support from all of my family and friends. I am especially grateful for my husband, John, and children, Kate, Wilson, and Allie for their love and understanding as I completed this degree.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
TITLE PAGE .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iv
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Arts coordination .....	3
Rural school leadership .....	3
Distributed leadership .....	4
Professional learning .....	5
Quality in the arts .....	6
Statement of the problem .....	6
Purpose of the study .....	7
Definition of key terms .....	8
Research questions .....	10
Delimitations .....	10
Conceptual framework .....	11
Research Design .....	13
Limitations .....	13
Significance of the study .....	14
Organization of the study .....	15
 II. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	16
Rural school leadership .....	17
Distributed leadership .....	21
Professional learning .....	26

	Quality in the arts.....	33
	Conceptual framework.....	42
	Conceptual diagram .....	46
	Theoretical perspective .....	47
	Summary .....	48
III.	Research Design.....	51
	Statement of the problem .....	51
	Purpose of the study.....	52
	Research questions.....	52
	Delimitations.....	52
	Methodology .....	53
	Research Methods.....	53
	Positionality statement .....	60
	Summary .....	61
IV.	Findings.....	62
	Research question one.....	62
	Levels of leadership and roles in arts coordination .....	64
	District leadership .....	64
	Arts leadership team .....	68
	Arts disciplinary team .....	71
	Research question two .....	85
	Arts coordination and quality.....	85
	Community connections .....	89
	Conclusion .....	93
V.	Discussion and Conclusion .....	95
	Distributed arts leadership .....	96
	Roles in arts coordination .....	98
	District leadership .....	98
	Arts leadership team .....	100
	Arts disciplinary team .....	101
	Program quality and community connections.....	105
	Quality in the arts.....	107
	Community connections .....	110
	Theoretical conclusion .....	111
	Distributed perspective .....	111

Sociocultural learning theory.....	114
Practical implications.....	116
Future research.....	119
Conclusion .....	119
APPENDICES .....	123
A: Interview Materials .....	124
B: Observation Materials .....	130
REFERENCES .....	134



## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
3.1 Description of interviewees .....	57
4.1 Leadership levels and roles in arts coordination.....	63
5.1 District leadership actions and their connection to quality and community .....	105
5.2 Arts leadership team actions and their connection to quality and community .....	106
5.3 Arts disciplinary team actions and their connection to quality and community .....	107

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.1	Conceptual diagram .....	46

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Visual and performing arts programs are an established dimension of the American school curriculum. However, access to quality programs varies by location even though research has proven their benefits. For instance, researchers have cited the academic and social benefits of student involvement in the arts (Catterall, Dumais, & Hapden-Thompson, 2012; Donovan & Brown, 2017). Catterall, Dumais, and Hapden-Thompson (2012) found that low socio-economic status (SES) students with high levels of arts engagement had better academic performance including higher grade point averages and higher rates of graduation and enrollment in college than students who had low engagement in the arts. Catterall et al. (2012) also found that students of low and high SES, who had high arts engagement, showed more civic-minded behavior and were more likely to have membership in an academic honor society. Donovan and Brown (2017) also noted academic benefits for underserved populations including improved learning capacity in language and mathematics. They further reported that involvement in the arts leads to enhanced creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, and fewer emotional and behavioral problems. Even though the benefits to students are well documented, school districts struggle to develop and maintain quality arts programs, partially due to budget issues and accountability requirements (Bodilly, Augustine, & Zakaras, 2008).

The passing of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) spurred an increased focus on improving student achievement in state-tested subjects (Barrett, Cowen, Toma, & Troske, 2015) sometimes to the detriment of other programs. Following the passing of NCLB, the national trend in school arts programs was a decrease in instructional time and altered scheduling practices. These trends had adverse effects on arts programs (Beveridge, 2010).

Like their urban counterparts, rural school districts may have to contend with an unfavorable policy environment stemming from the passage of NCLB. In addition, they face other challenges as a result of their rural context. Donovan and Brown (2017) identified the following unique barriers to providing access to arts programs in rural locations: “lack of economic opportunity, geographic distance, recruitment and retention of teachers and administrators, lack of funding for arts education, policies that do not support the arts, limited collection and analysis of data, and lack of representation on creative economy initiatives” (p.18).

In addition, anecdotal evidence from my experience working and interacting with rural school districts suggests a lack of full-time arts coordination. Instead, arts program leadership falls under the same umbrella as other instructional programs. As such, leadership of the arts is often assigned to a district leader, such as a superintendent of curriculum and instruction, who may have no arts background. This lack of full-time arts leadership may pose another challenge to providing access to quality arts programs in rural districts. Despite these challenges, some rural school districts have managed to provide quality arts programs. Though there are several possible reasons for their success,

effective arts coordination of leadership may be a central component and requires further investigation.

### **Arts Coordination**

Though researchers agree that arts coordination may affect the quality of arts programs and access to them, there is little empirical evidence that suggests how to coordinate a districts' art program, especially in a rural district. Bodilly et al. (2008) found that arts coordination, at the district level, was a step often taken to increase access to and quality of an arts program. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999) found that arts coordinators are vital to implementing a successful arts program and maintaining a supportive environment for the arts in the district and community. The latter report suggested that arts coordinators perform vital roles such as engaging influential community members, bringing arts to the table at budget meetings, negotiating policies between the central office and school administration, helping with the hiring of arts personnel, facilitating communication among schools, and fostering support for the arts in the school district and the community. Abril and Bannerman (2015) found that coordinators were considered to be important in communicating important information, supporting collaboration, and increasing the visibility of the arts program. These research studies explain some of the vital roles of an arts coordinator, but do not describe how to coordinate a program.

### **Rural School Leadership**

There are no studies examining arts coordination in a rural school district. However, lessons from the rural school leadership literature may apply to coordinating

arts leadership as well. For instance, researchers have noted the importance of rural leaders being responsive and adaptable to their context (Budge, 2006; Preston & Barnes, 2017, Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013). The research on effective rural school leadership also noted the importance of relationships (Preston & Barnes, 2017; Preston, et al., 2013) and the pervasive family atmosphere present in rural school districts (Budge, 2006). These concepts certainly may apply to the leadership of arts programs and may affect how a district coordinates the arts.

### **Distributed Leadership**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that most arts programs in rural school districts lack full-time supervision. Of the dozen rural districts I have interacted with, none had a full time leader. Instead, if the programs had any leadership, it was shared among one or more district leaders and/ or various arts teachers. Leadership responsibilities were divided among these individuals, sometimes haphazardly, and other times in a team-like structure.

Since arts leadership tends to be divided in a rural school district, the literature on distributed leadership (Leithwood, Mascal, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina, 2007; Harris, 2008) is relevant to understanding arts coordination in a rural school district. One of the characteristics of distributed leadership, according to Leithwood et al. (2007), is groups of people from different levels participating in direction-setting activities. While this pattern of leadership fits what is known, anecdotally, about the arts leadership in rural school districts, distributed leadership is more complicated than a division of labor.

A key to distributed leadership is how leaders provide supporting and facilitating structures (Harris, 2008).

### **Professional Learning**

Providing professional learning is an important role of district leaders. Researchers have found that professional learning is vital to making change and program improvements (Hall & Hord, 2015; Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell, & Rasmussen, 2006). Besides improving teaching practices and student learning, some researchers found that professional development was a promising strategy for retaining arts teachers in rural school districts (Donovan & Brown, 2017).

A dimension of professional learning is developing capacity, particularly in a distributed leadership model. Leithwood et al. (2007) found that developing people is a common practice in distributed leadership models. If a school district coordinates its arts using a distributed leadership model, then, logically, they may have taken steps to develop leaders in the arts. Building capacity involves providing an environment that supports continuous learning (Stoll & Bolam, 2005) and intellectual stimulation (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010).

Another important aspect of professional learning is uncovering the structures that support learning in the district. Since arts teachers are typically spread between many schools, it is important to examine how a rural district provides professional learning and what structures support professional learning. According to the literature, communities of practice are social structures that enable learning (Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder, 2002). A formalized community of practice (COP) is termed a professional learning

community (PLC). DuFour and Marzano (2011) and Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) noted the benefits of PLCs in terms of improving student outcomes.

### **Quality in the Arts.**

Bodilly et al. (2008) found that district arts coordination was a step taken to increase access to and quality of an arts program. However, before considering how arts coordination may affect quality, it is important to understand the literature surrounding quality in the arts. While there is no set definition of quality in the arts, there are markers of quality (Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, & Palmer, 2009). Researchers have also discovered that sites use common strategies to improve the quality of the arts (Bodilly et al., 2008). The Wallace Foundation report (Seidel et al., 2009) explored notions of quality in arts programs and found that quality presented itself through four lenses: learning, pedagogy, community dynamics, and environment. The arts program literature (Seidel et al., 2009; Bodilly et al., 2008, President's Committee the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999) is a starting point for understanding the potential impacts of arts coordination on the quality of the arts program

### **Statement of the Problem**

There is a shortage of research devoted to studying arts programs in rural school districts (Donovan & Brown, 2017), though research on rural school leadership may offer lessons that also apply to the leadership of arts programs. For instance, such researchers emphasize that successful rural school leaders act with an awareness of context and adapt their practices to suit it (Budge, 2006; Goldring, Huff, & Camburn, 2008; Harris, 2002; Preston & Barnes, 2017; and Preston, Jakubiec, & Kooymans, 2013). Donovan and



Brown (2017) are among the few researchers to consider how the rural context may present unique challenges for arts programs. These researchers examined barriers to providing access to arts programs in rural contexts and identified promising strategies for increasing access to such programs. Other arts researchers have examined how to improve access and the quality of arts programs in urban school districts (Bodilly et al., 2008). These researchers found sites used common strategies including audits, strategic planning, management of resources, and arts coordination to improve access to the arts. Though these researchers have expressed the value of arts coordination, they have not researched how to coordinate an arts program, especially in a rural school district in the absence of a full-time coordinator.

Additionally, few researchers have studied the perceived impacts that arts coordination may have on the quality of an arts program or its relationship to the community. If arts coordination improves access to and the quality of arts programs in urban districts, then arts coordination warrants a closer examination in rural contexts.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Researchers have found that arts coordination is vital to providing access to a quality arts program (Bodilly et al., 2008; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999). Yet, few researchers have examined arts coordination up close. Particularly, no one has studied how to coordinate an arts program in a rural school district. The purpose of the study was to examine how one rural school district coordinated its arts program. Building from a prior pilot study (Wages, 2018), the research focused on how the district involved different levels of leadership

from the district to the school level in order to coordinate its arts program. In addition, the study also examined the differing roles that leadership took related to arts coordination. An added focus was examining the role that arts disciplinary teams, functioning as communities of practice, played in coordinating the arts program. Another purpose of the study was to examine how distributing arts coordination impacted the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community. Findings from this study help to illuminate arts coordination in a rural school district. The findings also suggest possible impacts that arts coordination may have on the quality of an arts programs and its connection to the surrounding community.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Arts program.** The term is often used to describe both community and school provided arts instruction. In this study, unless otherwise noted, I use the term to refer to a school district-based arts instructional program.

**Arts coordination.** Arts coordination is not well defined in the literature. Some research has defined the roles that arts coordinators perform in fostering support for the arts program in the school district and community (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Abril & Bannerman, 2015) According to Merriam-Webster, coordination is "the process of organizing people or groups so that they work together properly and well." For the purpose of this study arts coordination refers to the process the school district uses to organize the arts program and ensure its effective operation, with an emphasis on leaders' roles in doing so.

**Community of practice.** This term is defined in the literature as a social structure wherein members of a group meet on an ongoing basis and develop shared knowledge that may include the creation of common tools and documents (Wenger et al., 2002).

**Distributed leadership.** There is not one single definition for distributed leadership. According to Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, and Hopkins (2001) distributed leadership is an umbrella term often used to describe varying types of shared leadership. In this research, I am also informed by the theoretical perspectives of Spillane and his colleagues. According to Spillane and Coldren (2011), “adopting a distributed perspective focuses our attention on how leadership practice takes shape in leaders’ interaction with other leaders and with followers and how the practice of leading and managing emerges in and through these interactions” (p. 31).

**Rural school district.** There is no a single definition for rurality. According to Budge (2006) there is also not a single set of descriptive characteristics for rural schools or communities. In defining this school district as rural, I am ascribing to the definition for rural fringe delineated by the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES). This census-defined rural locale code means the district is five or fewer miles from an urbanized area and 2.5 miles or less from an urban cluster. In Chapter 3, I unpack this NCES definition and provide more information to demonstrate the rural context of the study. Moving beyond the NCES definition provided, I attempted to follow the recommendation of rural researchers Biddle, Sutherland, and McHenry-Sorber (2019) who stated, “Rather than having to make the case that rurality shapes an educational phenomenon in a unique manner, we think that researchers should be able to demonstrate

the importance of their research for education in rural contexts” (p. 10). In other words, as researcher the onus is on me to explain how this study is relevant in a rural context.

### **Research Questions**

Question 1: How did one rural school district implement a distributed leadership model in order to coordinate its arts program?

Question 2: According to arts teachers and leaders, how did distributing arts coordination impact the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community?

### **Delimitations**

The delimitations associated with this study are the result of the case study design. Since I desired to gain an in-depth understanding of arts leadership in one district, I constrained the participants to those who had the most knowledge of and experience with the arts leadership in the district. As researcher, I chose to include visual and performing arts teachers who had served on the arts leadership team for two or more years or who had taught in the district for at least five years. Additionally, I included current and former employees who served as teachers or leaders in the arts. I decided to include the latter group in order to gain a historical view of arts leadership in the district.

Another delimitation of the research is the focus on leadership aspects of rural arts coordination, instead of taking an in-depth look at curriculum and instruction. As researcher, I acknowledge that curriculum and instruction falls under the responsibility of a district leader. However, the purpose of this study was to examine how the district coordinated its arts program by implementing distributed leadership.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Since this study is unique, there was no prior conceptual framework to draw from. Instead, I began with anecdotal knowledge of how rural school districts tended to provide arts coordination. Then, I found research related to potential components of rural arts coordination, focusing on the following areas: rural school leadership, distributed leadership, professional learning, and quality in the arts. By combining these conceptual areas of research, I created a framework to aid my understanding of arts coordination in a rural school district.

I began by investigating rural school leadership, realizing lessons from this literature may also apply to the leadership of rural arts programs. For example, researchers have noted the importance of rural leaders being responsive and adaptable to their context (Budge, 2006; Preston & Barnes, 2017, Preston et al., 2013). As a researcher, I should consider how the context affected the coordination of the arts in this district.

Anecdotal evidence suggests arts leadership in a rural district is divided between different leaders. Therefore, I turned to the literature on distributed leadership to gain a better understanding. The literature on distributed leadership emphasizes that the formal leader must extend leadership to others in the organization (Harris; 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007). As a researcher, I have to identify the formal leaders in the arts and go from there to discover to whom leadership responsibilities have been assigned. The next conceptual component, professional learning, goes hand in hand with distributed leadership and providing quality programs. Organizations that adopt distributed

leadership likely take steps to develop their people (Leithwood et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to examine how this district provides professional learning in the arts, and what structures support it, such as communities of practice. Arts researchers also identified professional learning as strategy that may impact access to arts programs and the quality of arts program (Donovan & Brown, 2017).

The final conceptual component of the study is quality in the arts. The overarching theme from the literature is that there is no one definition of quality, but there are key components or factors (Baxley, Burgess, Melnick, Nesbit, 2014; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Seidel et al., 2009). In addition, common strategies are often used to improve quality and/or access in the arts (Bodilly et al., 2008; Donovan & Brown, 2017).

The conceptual framework, as described, provides a means of understanding how one rural school district coordinated its arts program and the impact coordination had on the quality of the program. In the context of rural school leadership, I investigated how this district coordinated the arts by distributing leadership into different levels. I also identified specific roles, related to coordination of the program, that members at each level performed. In addition, I examined the structures the district put in place to support professional learning. Finally, I examined the impacts arts coordination had on the quality of the program and its relationship to the community.

The conceptual framework provides organization to the research and identifies potential areas of leadership focus that may promote arts coordination. To move past a structural understanding of arts coordination, I applied principles from sociocultural

learning theory to deepen my understanding of how learning was situated within communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and how the knowledge that was created, facilitated the coordination of the arts.

### **Research Design**

In order to examine how a rural school district coordinated its arts program, I used a single case study with a holistic design (Yin, 2009). Using the case study method was appropriate for this study, since my research questions were descriptive in nature (Yin, 2006). I conducted interviews, observed meetings and events, and gathered relevant documents in order to collect data related to the two research questions. Using these varied sources of data allowed for triangulation of the data (Yin, 2006).

### **Limitations**

The primary limitation of this study stemmed from its design as a case study. As such, the results of the study may not be generalizable to all rural school districts. In addition, the findings may not be applicable to non-rural districts. Since the design was a single case study in a small district, the amount of overall data collected in the study was somewhat limited. However, I attempted to triangulate my findings through multiple interviews, observations, and document analysis. I also aligned my findings with related research, giving the study more credibility. Despite the possible limitations of the study, the findings provided insight into how one rural school district coordinated its arts program and suggested the impacts arts coordination had on the quality of the program and its connection to the community.

## **Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study is that it provides insight into how a rural school district can coordinate its arts program using distributed leadership. In an urban district, Bodilly et al. (2008) found that arts coordination was a strategy to improve access to and the quality of arts programs. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999) also found a connection between having an arts coordinator and quality. In their study, school districts that valued the arts employed arts coordinators. Even a smaller district had an arts coordinator, though not on a full-time basis. Though the above research documents the benefits of arts coordination, there is little empirical information about how to coordinate an arts program. This study sheds light on arts coordination in rural school districts, where limited resources prevent the employment of a full-time arts coordinator. Uniquely, this research yielded a close examination of the different levels of leadership involved in coordinating an arts program, and their respective roles in coordination of the arts. Further, the use of a distributed framework to study the leadership of an arts program is unique.

From a practical standpoint, the results of the study suggest important lessons for rural school districts leaders seeking to provide arts coordination. Though they will need to be adapted for context, lessons from this study could provide a baseline for further research. This study provides a descriptive examination of how one rural school district coordinated its arts program using distributed leadership. This initial study could be expanded to include more school districts in order to build a broader understanding of how rural school districts, in general, coordinate their arts programs. In this way, the



study provides a building block for future research involving arts coordination in rural school districts. This research may also add to the literature base concerning effective leadership practices for arts programs in rural school settings.

### **Organization of the Study**

This research study includes five chapters. In Chapter I, I presented the background of the study, problem statement, research purpose, research questions, delimitations, conceptual framework, theoretical framework, research design, limitation, significance, and organization of the study. In Chapter II, I reviewed the literature centered on the conceptual grounding in rural school leadership, distributed leadership, professional learning, and quality in the arts. I also examined the literature related to theoretical aspects of the study, sociocultural learning theory. In Chapter III, I presented the methodology of the study, described the site, participants, methods of data collection, and data analysis procedures. In Chapter IV, I presented the study's findings including data analysis in terms of the research questions. In Chapter V, I concluded the study with a final summary, discussion of theoretical and practical implications of the findings, and recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Although visual and performing arts programs are well established in American schooling, there is great variation in access to quality programming. Even within a single school district, there may be significant differences in the quantity and quality of arts experiences afforded to students. Additionally, rural school districts face unique challenges that hinder their ability to provide access to a quality arts program (Donovan & Brown, 2017).

Few researchers have studied arts programs in rural settings and Donovan and Brown (2017) are among the few who examined how to improve access to arts programs in rural areas. Other researchers have examined arts programs in strictly urban areas (Bodilly et al. 2008) or in a combination of rural, suburban, and urban settings (Baxley, Burgess, Melnick, Nesbit, 2014; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999; and Seidel et al., 2009). Two of these studies found that arts coordination at the district level was a marker of a quality program (Bodilly et al. 2008; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999). One of these studies was situated in an urban context (Bodilly et al., 2008) while the other (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999), featured data from 91 school districts varying from rural to urban contexts. The latter study reported that in districts that valued the arts, school board members and superintendents emphasized the importance of hiring an effective arts coordinator. Yet, no researchers have explicitly examined how a rural

school district coordinates its arts program. Nor, has anyone examined the perceived impact that arts coordination may have on the quality of a rural arts program or its presence in the community. In a pilot study, I found one rural district distributed arts leadership with intention by establishing an arts leadership team (Wages, 2018). However, the pilot only began to explore how the district distributed arts coordination. Extending this pilot study (Wages, 2018), in the current study, I examined how one rural school district coordinated its arts program using different levels of leadership and I investigated the impact that distributing arts coordination had on the quality of the district's arts program and its presence in the community.

Since there is no prior study on rural arts coordination, I had to create my own conceptual framework. I used the research that was available along with the results of the pilot study as a guide. In order to frame this study, I examined the literature from the following areas: rural school leadership, distributed leadership, professional learning, and quality in the arts. In the final section of Chapter 2, I present my conceptual framework and theoretical grounding in sociocultural learning theory. This theoretical framework has never been used to understand arts coordination. Using this perspective as an analytical tool to interpret the findings may bring insight and understanding to arts coordination in a rural school district.

### **Rural School Leadership**

The context of the study is a rural school district in the southeastern portion of the United States. Rurality in this case was not the central feature under investigation. However, findings from the study should be understood within the rural context.

Hallinger (2018) noted the tendency for leadership studies to ignore matters of context and keep them in the shadows. However, for this study, I must consider the rural context an important aspect of the situation of leadership. This context may affect how leaders and followers interact and go about leadership tasks including distributing leadership, increasing leadership capacity, and implementing professional learning. Further, the findings of the study may have greater clarity when analyzed in light of rural school leadership. Therefore, in the next paragraphs, I identify key aspects of rural school leadership.

A critical aspect of leadership is the situation in which leadership unfolds. Where leaders work and where leadership practice transpires is the situation (Spillane and Coldren, 2011). Characteristics of the situation may promote or hinder leadership practice. As Spillane and Coldren (2011) explained, the situation frames the interactions among leaders and followers in the organization. Since the context of my study is rural, I must consider how this setting may potentially influence the situation of leadership.

Bredeson, Klar, and Johansson (2011), Hallinger (2018), and Clark and O'Donoghue (2017) recognized the multi-layers of context school leaders must act within. Clark and O'Donoghue (2017) and Preston et al. (2013) emphasized the need for leaders to be sensitive to matters of context. Specifically, Clark and O'Donoghue stated that contextually responsive leaders needed to be attuned to “the people, problems and issues, as well as the culture of the school and the community in which one is located” (p. 177). In other words, such leaders consider the needs and issues of people within various

layers of context from the school to the community. Besides recognizing the importance of context, I examine the literature on effective rural school leadership.

Successful rural leadership is multidimensional. Preston et al. (2013) described it as “place-conscious, and relationship-dependent; the needs and priorities of students, parents and community members require a leader who is knowledgeable about educational policies, yet receptive to the distinctive needs, perceptions, and culture of educational stakeholders of that rural community” (p. 7). Preston et al. (2003) described a balancing act between maintaining relationships, prioritizing needs, and interpreting policies for the local context. These researchers also noted that leaders act within multiple layers of context.

The research on effective rural school leadership also emphasizes the importance of relationships (Preston & Barnes, 2017; Preston et al., 2013) and the feeling of family present in rural school districts (Budge, 2006). In their review of literature, Preston and Barnes (2017) termed this type of leadership people-centered. Researchers found that successful leaders nurture relationships with all stakeholders (Preston & Barnes, 2017; Preston et al., 2013). Further, in order to be successful, rural school leaders must adeptly navigate relationships with staff, parents, students, and community members (Preston & Barnes, Preston et al., 2013). In her case study of rural school leadership, Budge (2006) reported the leaders she interviewed consistently expressed the sense of family that united the district and the community. The family atmosphere was evidence of a strong relational focus. Preston and Barnes (2017) found that an important characteristic of people-centered leadership was collaboration among staff, parents and students, and

community stakeholders. These researchers found that rural school principals relied on teamwork to accomplish their goals. Furthermore, successful rural principals collaborated with teachers and were adept at balancing competing expectations between various stakeholders (Preston & Barnes, 2017).

Researchers have found that effective rural school leaders have the ability to adapt their practices to suit their context (Goldring et al., 2008; Harris, 2002) and act with an awareness of place (Budge, 2006; Preston & Barnes, 2017). Budge (2006) stated that to have influence, leaders must have a thorough understanding of their community's values. Preston and Barnes (2017) stated that successful rural school leadership necessitates an understanding of the geographical and cultural context of the community. Successful rural school leaders recognize and navigate the multiple layers of context: school, district, and national. They also know how to balance competing expectations while staying attuned to the vision of the school district. Even school boards have acknowledged the tension that arises when trying to balance the expectations of different stakeholders (Budge, 2006). Budge (2006) found that board members were aware of the "tension between professional practices, such as those related to standards-based reform and high stakes testing, and community values and expectations" (p. 7). Successful rural leadership is adaptable and responsive to context (Klar & Brewer, 2014). Further, successful rural leaders are adept at striking a balance between policy and practice while satisfying all stakeholder groups.

No studies have specifically examined characteristics of rural arts leadership. However, lessons from the rural school leadership literature may be relevant to

understanding arts leadership in a rural school district. Successful rural school leadership is multi-faceted, dependent on relationships, adaptable, and responsive to context. As I turn to investigate rural arts leadership, these characteristics may be evident in how leadership is coordinated and enacted in this district. How leadership is spread across the organization is a central component of distributed leadership analysis. Likewise, understanding how leaders work within and according to context is important in distributed leadership analysis (Halverson & Clifford, 2013). On the foundation of rural school leadership, I turn to examine the distributed leadership literature.

### **Distributed Leadership**

Rural school districts seldom have the resources to pay a full-time district arts coordinator, which is more common in larger urban contexts. Instead, the trend is for these districts to divide leadership of the arts between district leaders and arts teachers. In my pilot study of one rural school district, I found that leadership was distributed among an arts leadership team with the oversight of a district leader (Wages, 2018). The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999) found that in smaller districts, arts coordination duties were assigned to a curriculum specialist and/ or other arts educators.

In other rural school districts with which I am acquainted, the leadership of the arts programs is distributed among several teachers under a formal district leader. In a district where I worked, the formal leader of the arts program was the assistant superintendent. A visual arts teacher coordinated the artistically gifted and talented program, a visual arts teacher acted as a visual arts coordinator, and I coordinated the

performing arts and served as a fine arts team leader. From my experience and the research available, I have found that distributing arts coordination is typical in rural districts. Therefore, in order to pursue my inquiry into rural arts coordination, I need to understand the basic tenets of distributed leadership. Since a single definition of distributed leadership is difficult to pinpoint, I explored characteristics of distributed leadership and sought to understand the challenges of implementing a distributed leadership structure.

Leithwood, Mascal, Strauss, Sacks, Memon, and Yashkina (2007) explained that a characteristic of distributed leadership includes a group of people from different levels, instead of only from the top, engaged in direction-setting activities. Harris (2008) recognized that in distributed leadership, though all people in an organization have the potential to lead, “the key to success will be the way that leadership is facilitated, orchestrated and supported” (p. 173). In other words, for distributed leadership to occur, leaders have to provide the structure. In fact, Harris (2008) and Leithwood et al. (2007) found that successful distributed leadership depended on formal leaders to extend leadership responsibilities to different members of the organization.

Harris and DeFlaminis (2016) identified misconceptions about distributed leadership that are worth noting. First, distributed leadership does not mean that everyone leads in the organization. Second, there is not a singular way to distribute leadership in an organization. Third, they noted that “not all forms of distributed leadership are enabling or impactful” (p. 4). As noted in the above paragraph, successful distribution of leadership depends on how it is enacted in context.



Researchers have cited several advantages to a distributed leadership structure. Among different styles of leadership studied, researchers found distributed leadership structures best promoted and sustained change in the organization (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011; Mitgang, Cummins, & Gill, 2013). Louis et al., (2010) found that collective leadership forms benefit student achievement more than individual types of leadership. Collective in this case means the combined sources of leadership in the organization.

Distributing leadership in a rural school district may have an added dimension, the community. Starr (2016) concluded that in rural schools, leadership is distributed within and across the communities as well as within the school. She also found that formal and informal leaders were responsible for successful collaboration.

Implementing distributed leadership does not come without its challenges. Harris (2008) delineated the following ones: distance, culture, and structure. Geographic separation among teachers can make collaboration difficult. Secondly, distributed leadership requires a culture-shift away from “top-down” structures of leadership “to a form of leadership that is more organic, spontaneous and more difficult to control” (p.183). The last challenge to implementing distributed leadership is overcoming the compartmentalized structure of schooling (Harris, 2008). These challenges are particularly important to overcome in a district arts program, since by nature, these teachers are geographically separated from each other in the building and between several schools.

The work of Spillane and his colleagues also guides my understanding of distributed leadership, though more in a theoretical than structural sense. Spillane,

Halverson, and Diamond's (2001) work on distributed leadership can be used as an analytical lens to interpret findings related to distributed leadership. Spillane and Coldren (2011) highlighted three aspects of taking a distributive perspective: leader-plus, practice, and situation.

First, is the leader-plus aspect, which recognizes that in a distributed perspective there are multiple leaders, both formal and informal (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). Studying leadership requires the researcher, then, to identify these people. They also explained the importance of understanding how practice is distributed across multiple people in the organization. Spillane and Coldren (2011) described three potential ways leadership is distributed: by design, default, or in crisis. Leadership by design occurs when routines are established in order to accomplish tasks. People in the organization are given responsibilities and opportunities to lead the work. Leadership by default occurs when someone steps up to fill a leadership need that suddenly appears. Finally, distributed leadership during crisis occurs when leaders and followers work to gather to work out an unanticipated problem (Spillane and Coldren, 2011).

The practice aspect is the second part of a distributed framework. According to Spillane and Coldren (2011), analyzing the practice means focusing in on day-to-day practice and seeking to understand how practice is shaped by leadership interactions. In their research with school leaders, Spillane, Diamond, and Jita (2010) discovered that material artifacts, such as tools and routines, are central to instructional leadership. These artifacts are not just a background element of leadership. Instead Spillane et al. (2010)

explained how they serve to define leadership interactions. Understanding the practice aspect also means discovering how multiple leaders co-perform organizational tasks.

The final aspect of taking a distributed perspective is the situation. Simply stated, the situation is where leaders work. Though the situation of leadership is often taken for granted, characteristics of the situation can shape leadership practice (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). The situation includes everything in the school environment from the faculty and students to tools used in the practice of leadership. In fact, Spillane and Coldren (2011) stated that, organizational tools and routines are a central aspect of the situation and “Aspects of the situation help constitute leading and managing practice by focusing and framing the interactions among leaders and followers” (p. 41). The aspect, situation, dovetails nicely to the conceptual dimension of rural school leadership. The situation aspect recognizes the elements of the context are not a backdrop to leadership, but help define leadership practice (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). One of the repeated themes in the literature is the need for leaders to be sensitive to matters of context (Clark & O’Donoghue, 2017; Preston et al., 2013). Particularly in a rural school district, there are certain inherent characteristics of the situation that influence leadership. Researchers in this setting have noted that leadership is dependent on the context and the relationships between stakeholders (Preston et al., 2017, Preston et al., 2013). Effective rural leaders have an ability to adapt their practice to the context (Goldring et al., 2008; Harris, 2002). In other words, characteristics of the situation determine how leadership is enacted.

Using the distributed perspective as an analytical lens will help me understand how and why the district distributed leadership. The leader-plus aspect recognizes that

multiple people in formal and informal roles lead an organization. As I proceed in my study, I must identify who these leaders are to understand how arts leadership is coordinated. The practice aspect emphasizes leadership at the interaction level (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). For my analysis, this means I will attempt to focus on the interactions between leaders and followers to understand how leadership is distributed, capacity is built, and professional learning is implemented in this district's arts program. I will not simply describe the structure that is in place but attempt to understand how interactions facilitated the coordination of the arts program. Further, since tools are an important part of the situation (Spillane & Coldren, 2011), I will investigate how tools and routines shape leadership practice.

### **Professional Learning**

Developing people in an organization was found to be one of the central practices of successful educational leadership (Louis et al., 2010). In this study, I sought to understand how the district coordinated professional learning in a distributed leadership context. Therefore, I divided this section into three research areas that may potentially inform my findings related to professional learning: (1) professional learning, in general, and in arts programs; (2) building capacity; (3) and team learning and communities of practice.

**Professional learning in general and in arts programs.** Several key themes emerged from the literature related to professional learning, in general, and in arts programs. First, professional learning is vital to implementing change and/ or improving programs (Hall & Hord, 2015; Wagner et al., 2006). Secondly, professional development

is a strategy utilized to impact access to and the quality of arts programs (Donovan & Brown, 2017). Lastly, professional learning for arts teachers also includes an added dimension, teacher as artist (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership Arts Advantage, 1999).

Professional learning is an important part of making change in an organization. Hall and Hord (2015) stated, "Change is learning—it's as simple and complicated as that" (p. 9). As they explained, in order to change, people in the organization have to learn new ways and understandings. Wagner et al. (2006) also found that making change requires new knowledge to be created in order to solve educational issues. Professional learning opportunities can take various forms, but should align to the vision for change (Hall & Hord, 2015). Hall and Hord (2015) stated that "organizations adopt change—individuals implement change" (p.12). In other words, the organization will not change unless every member of the group changes. Therefore, they state the critical nature of supporting new learning to enable the change initiative (Hall & Hord, 2015). The school improvement literature supports the establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs). DuFour and Marzano (2011) and Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) found that the collaboration in PLCs led to improved teaching practices and improved student outcomes.

Some researchers found that arts programs concerned with quality focus on professional development as one key strategy (Donovan & Brown, 2017). In their rurally-focused study, Donovan and Brown (2017) found that professional development served to unite teachers and sustain them, making them more likely to stay in the profession.

Some of the sites studied utilized individual development plans, such as mentorship programs. Donovan and Brown also found that sites participated in local and regional professional development opportunities. Some states, including California, Maine, Montana, Arkansas, and Massachusetts, have active networks of arts educators that connected leaders across regions and states as well as provided ongoing professional learning (Donovan & Brown, 2017). Bodilly et al. (2008) found partnerships with community-based organizations helped to provide professional development.

Bodilly et al. (2008) found a community-based program called Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership that provided professional development in Alameda County, California. Bodilly et al. (2008) found that the Alliance for Arts Learning Leadership provided professional development to 400 local arts administrators and artists. The focus of the program was incorporating visual art, music, theatre, and dance into the core curricula.

Professional learning in the arts has another dimension, perhaps, absent from general education. Teachers in the arts are artists, having specialized in an art form in college. A key factor in successful arts programs is developing teachers as artists. In arts sites that were successful, leaders continued to develop teachers as artists (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership Arts Advantage, 1999). These researchers found that no matter the art form, teachers who pursued their artistic lives supported by administrators reported favorably on their commitment to their art form and teaching. Likewise, administrators who were

interviewed reported that the best arts teachers participate in community exhibitions and performances.

Three key themes emerged from examining the literature on professional learning. Researchers found that providing professional learning is a crucial element of implementing change and/ or improving programs (Hall & Hord, 2015; Wagner et al., 2006). In terms of arts programs, professional development is a strategy that impacts the access to and the quality of arts programs (Donovan & Brown, 2017) and districts that value the arts are concerned with developing the teacher as artist (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership Arts Advantage, 1999). While considering these lessons from the literature, I examined how this district provides professional learning for their arts teachers. I was particularly concerned with what structures were in place to provide professional learning. In addition, I investigated how providing professional learning opportunities aided the coordination of the arts.

**Building capacity.** Developing capacity is a dimension of professional learning. Building capacity involves providing an environment that supports continuous learning (Stoll & Bolam, 2005) and intellectual stimulation (Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Developing leadership capacity can also support the implementation of a distributed leadership model. Leithwood et al. (2007) found that developing people is a common practice in distributed leadership models. If a school district coordinates its arts using a distributed leadership model, then, logically, they may have taken steps to develop leadership capacity.

There are no studies that specifically examine how to increase leadership capacity in an arts program context. However, the school leadership literature contains lessons that may also be applicable to district arts leadership. In this section, I review the research related to the development of leadership capacity in school settings and seek a definition that will prove useful in my analysis. Lastly, I consider how these lessons may be applied to leadership of the arts.

The development of leadership capacity in an organization can be intentional. Honig (2012) and Klar (2012) found that formal leaders can take specific actions to improve instructional and leadership capacity in principals and department chairs, respectively. Honig (2012) found that district office leaders strengthened principals' leadership through the following practices: joint work, goal setting, differentiation, modeling, use of tools, and brokering. Leithwood et al. (2007) also found that modeling desirable practices, giving individual support, and providing intellectual stimulation were ways to develop people in the organization. Klar (2012) found that principals provided opportunities for others to lead and focused on creating "a shared understanding of distributed instructional leadership" (Klar, 2012, p. 176). The cited research identified intentional actions a school leader may choose to take to develop leadership capacity.

Some researchers sought more clarity in defining the actions associated with developing leadership capacity. In their study of school leadership, Klar, Huggins, Hammonds, and Buskey (2015) examined how school leaders fostered capacity and specifically looked at actions that "increased the motivations, knowledge, skills, and dispositions of others to assume leadership roles in their school" (p. 6). Understanding



the development of leadership capacity in terms of these specific areas of action may help me more clearly identify how arts leaders developed leadership capacity. Another important aspect of developing leadership capacity is creating the right environment for leaders to thrive. Stoll and Bolam (2005) emphasized that building capacity was about creating supportive conditions and opportunities for learning.

There is scant research concerning the development of leadership capacity in district arts programs. In a pilot study (Wages, 2018), I found that school district leaders provided opportunities for arts teachers to attend training and gave them opportunities to lead other teachers. My findings were in line with other prior research findings (Klar, 2012; Leithwood et al, 2007; Stoll & Bolam, 2005). Like these researchers I found that district leaders can take action to develop leadership capacity by providing opportunities to learn and lead.

There is some research to suggest that capacity building affects access to quality arts programs. Bodilly et al. (2008) sought to identify strategies to increase access and quality of arts in urban communities and found capacity building to be a key strategy. They found that at all six case study sites worked to build the capacities of all teachers and administrators involved in teaching and supporting the arts.

Though there is little research pertaining to developing leadership capacity in arts programs, the school leadership literature offers important lessons. For instance, the development of leadership capacity can be intentional (Honig, 2012; Klar, 2012). Educational leaders can take actions to develop leaders by providing an environment that includes opportunities to learn and lead (Klar, 2012). The cited arts program research

indicates that leaders take specific action to develop leadership capacity in the arts and that increasing leadership capacity is a key strategy employed to increase the access and/or quality of arts programs (Bodilly et al., 2008; Wages, 2018).

**Team learning and communities of practice.** In a distributed leadership context, understanding how the district structured professional learning is important. Anecdotally and empirically (Wages, 2018), I have observed arts leadership is often divided in a team-like structure in rural school districts that lack full time coordinators. Thus, research related to learning in teams and in communities may prove useful to understanding how this district structured professional learning in the arts.

Team learning may provide insight into behaviors that promote learning on an arts leadership team. In their meta-analysis, Koeslag-Kreunen, Bossche, Hoven, Van der Klink, and Gijssels (2018) found that team leadership behavior can support team learning. Specifically, they found the following factors supporting leadership behaviors: building relationships and trust, providing challenges and empowering team members, and giving structure to the leadership team's work. Koeslag-Kreunen et al. (2018) also noted the importance of letting team members feel as though they were in control of decision-making.

Communities of practice (COPs) are not a new concept according to Wenger et al., (2002). These researchers explained that COPs have been around since prehistoric times, they are everywhere, and we all belong to several different types. Their definition of a community of practice is “groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by

interacting on an ongoing basis” (p. 4). Communities of practice are a social structure that enable new learning. Together, members of the community develop a shared knowledge that may include the creation of common tools and documents (Wenger et al., 2002). Wenger et al. (2002) made a critical point that communities of practice “do not reduce knowledge to an object” (p. 9). Instead, knowledge transpires in the activities and interactions of the community members. In order to be a community of practice, the following three characteristics must be present: (1) a domain of shared interest (2) a community that meets together and engages in activities and discussions, and (3) shared practice resulting in the creation of shared tools and resources (Wenger, 2009).

In the educational environment, professional learning communities are a formal type of COP that are becoming increasingly popular. The school improvement literature supports the establishment of professional learning communities (PLCs). DuFour and Marzano (2011) and Louis and Wahlstrom (2011) found that the collaboration in PLCs led to improved teaching practices and improved student outcomes. In this research study, I investigated the team structures that facilitated the coordination of the arts, including providing professional learning for arts teachers.

### **Quality in the Arts**

A final conceptual component of this research is quality in the arts. In this study, I investigated what stakeholders perceived to be the effect of arts coordination on the quality of the district’s arts program. In order to understand the significance of my findings, I considered how researchers define quality in the arts. Oregon Community Foundation (2017) noted that the literature on quality in arts education comes from a

variety of contexts from in school arts programs to community-based afterschool programs. As Seidel et al. (2009) found what constitutes a quality program varies according to the type of program and its goals. Oregon Community Foundation (2017) also advised that arts programs must consider which elements of quality best fit their program's goals. An overarching principle is there is not a clear definition of quality in the arts. However, there are some key concepts related to quality in the arts that may guide my understanding.

One way of conceptualizing quality in the arts is by providing access to arts opportunities. In fact, Bodilly et al. (2008) found that study sites emphasized improved access more than quality. However, they explained that it was understood that sites were striving for improved access to high quality programming (Bodilly et al., 2008). Therefore, I included research related to improving access as well as quality, since this line is blurred in the research. Two major themes have emerged from the review of research related to quality in the arts. First, there are key components to having a quality arts program. Second, common strategies are often used to improve quality and/or access in the arts. In the following sections, I report findings from five research studies that relate to quality in the arts.

A large-scale Wallace report (Seidel et al., 2009) examined the construct of quality in arts learning and teaching. This extensive report included data from urban, suburban, rural areas. Overall, they found there is no singular recipe for achieving quality in the arts, but there are key components. They explained that quality programs are focused on meeting multiple big goals simultaneously and are concerned with the quality

and alignment of student learning experiences to the programs' core goals and beliefs. Additionally, researchers found that quality programs continually seek "alignment between a program's purposes, its vision of quality, and the programmatic decisions that are made at all levels by all constituencies" (Seidel et al., 2009, p. 88). It is important to note the pursuit of aligning the program to goals and beliefs is a continual effort. In addition, quality arts programs are responsive to the layers of context, especially in regard to decision-making. In summary, they found the pursuit of quality, by nature, is ongoing and involves constant evaluation of programmatic values in light of what is actually happening "in the room" (Seidel et al., 2009, p. 88). In other words, they found that pursuing quality in arts programs consists of constant program evaluation to ensure decisions and actions align to the vision and goals of the program. An overall theme the researchers emphasized is that reflection and conversation about the quality of programs is a marker of a quality program and spurs on the pursuit of quality. Out of the dialogue surrounding what constitutes quality in the arts, new beliefs and philosophies may emerge (Seidel et al., 2009).

In a government report, researchers from the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999) identified key factors that need to be in place in order to create a quality and sustainable arts program in a variety of school district settings (1999). The study included rural, suburban, and urban districts. These critical factors were stated with the caveat that the local context is crucial to understanding how these factors play out. Not all of these factors were identified in every district, though enough were present to create and maintain a quality arts program in

these districts. The list of factors was extensive; therefore, I will only highlight a few key factors. Like Bodilly et al. (2008), researchers found a critical success factor was having a district arts coordinator. The arts coordinator acted to implement and sustain a cohesive systemic arts program. Echoing themes from the rural school research, community and parental/ public relations were found to be an important factor. Also, in successful districts, researchers found the community was actively engaged in the policies and programs related to the arts programs. Likewise, school leaders were actively pursuing positive relations with the community at large.

In their study, Bodilly et al. (2008) investigated how to increase access and/or the quality of arts programs in urban settings. Bodilly et al. (2008) identified strategies that six sites used to improve access to the arts: (1) conducting surveys of the arts programs; (2) making a goal of universal access; (3) engaging in strategic planning; (4) acquiring and managing resources; (5) employing an arts education coordinator to serve high in the district administration; (6) building capacity of all individuals involved in the arts programs from instruction to supporting; and (7) advocating for arts education at the local and state level. While researchers stated that these sites were most concerned with improving access, they also initiated similar steps to improve the quality of their arts programs: strategic planning; alignment of curriculum to state standards; curriculum development; building individual and organizational capacity; student assessment of learning; and peer review of teachers.

Donovan and Brown (2017) studied how to improve access to arts education in rural settings. After identifying barriers to providing arts education, their inquiry

examined promising strategies for increasing access, primarily in rural public school settings. Their most repeated theme was the significance of creating rural networks. They discovered that these networks aided pathways of communication and professional development, and connected people in the organization.

Donovan and Brown (2017) also found a promising strategy to be a context-responsive approach to arts education. Taking this approach meant realizing there is variance in characteristics among rural districts. Districts have different cultures and assets, which must be considered when implementing an arts program. One interviewee stressed the importance of building relationships in rural locations in consideration of context. She noted that in a small rural community, there is a potential for mistrust to develop so taking time for relationship building is critical. Researchers also recognized that building on the assets of the rural location is another successful strategy. As they explained, rural locations can offer unique opportunities that are not available in urban centers. Interviewees cited the relational focus and community connectedness as strengths of rural locations.

Donovan and Brown (2017) found another promising strategy to be the effective use of data to inform decision-making. Using surveys as a means to gauge the state of the arts was common practice. Rural districts also reported using strategies to connect to the surrounding community in order to foster support for the arts program. For example, many rural communities connected local artists to educational programs. In these cases, the arts fostered a sense of place that could connect communities and build mutually

beneficial relationship between different segments of the population, including the students.

Increasing access to the arts is aided by implementing policies favorable to the arts (Donovan & Brown, 2017). School districts with local control were found to have the flexibility to prioritize the arts. Interviewees explained that the shift to local control allowed for community input and allowed the district to refocus on bringing the arts back to the classroom. Collaboration, Donovan and Brown (2017) explained, is another common strategy employed in rural school areas. Cross-sector collaboration allowed non-educational entities to work with educational groups to expand access and resources. Another type of collaboration Donovan and Brown (2017) discovered, was cross-disciplinary, in which different disciplines worked together for change instead fighting over territory. Interviewees also stressed the importance of professional development to bring arts personnel together, sustain them, and encourage them to stay in the profession (Donovan and Brown, 2017).

Researchers (Donovan & Brown, 2017) found another strategy to be the efficient and creative use of resources. Largely, this depended on how effectively individual school administrators used funding. Interviewees also reported finding varied sources of grant funding. The last strategy found to improve access to arts education was the use of technology to bridge geographic distance. Some rural areas have great access to the internet. In such areas, teachers are expanding access to varied arts experiences through the use of webinars and Skype.



In a regional study, Baxley et al. (2014) identified characteristics of quality arts programs in the South. They identified four broad themes, which they illustrated through specific case studies. First, they found that relationships were important in the classroom, school, and abroad in the community. Baxley et al. (2014) also found successful arts programs were part of a shared vision and mission that was understood by all stakeholders. Another characteristic they discovered is the mindset that the arts are part of the core curriculum. They found that this mindset entails the development of a standards-based and sequential curriculum and coordinating assessments. Further, this mindset means that programs should be taught by individuals with expertise in the pedagogy of their art form. Lastly, quality arts programs engage students in the professional world of artists. These programs emphasized the artistic process more than the product. They also exposed students to professional artists in the working world (Baxley et al., 2014).

A final report by the Oregon Community Foundation (2017) delineated two overarching principles that applied to arts programs regardless of their context. First, schools and other organizations with high quality arts programs display a commitment for the arts through their words and actions. Like other researchers (Baxley et al., 2014; Bodilly et al., 2008), they found that such programs create arts strategic plans that include a shared mission and vision. Another broad theme from their research is that in high-quality programs there is a concerted effort to connect the program to the real-world of artists by “bringing professionalism, discipline and real-world practice into the classroom” (Oregon Community Foundation, 2017, p. 2).

In this review, I examined literature related to quality in the arts. Although there is no clear definition of quality in the arts (Seidel, et al., 2009) the review did yield key themes, which when combined, lead to a greater understanding of quality. First, there are key components to having a quality arts program, though they do not have to all be present in every context (Oregon Community Foundation, 2017). The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999), found critical factors that needed to be in place in order to create and maintain a quality and sustainable arts program. From their expansive lists, I highlighted the following factors: having a district arts coordinator, developing community and parental relations, and involving the community in the policies and programs related to the arts. The Oregon Community Foundation (2017) also found that involving the community and building mutual commitment to be important for quality programs. Baxley et al. (2014) also found a key theme of quality to be building relationships with stakeholders. In addition, they found that the stakeholders understood and supported the vision and mission for the arts program. Seidel et al. (2009) also found that the vision to be a driving force in the program. They stated that a necessary component of high quality programming is the alignment of the program goals to its vision.

Programs that are focused on improving quality and/or access often implement common strategies. Some of these strategies include: strategic planning, alignment of curriculum to state standards, curriculum development, building individual and organizational capacity, student assessment of learning, and peer review of teachers (Bodilly et al., 2008). Baxley et al. (2014) also found that standards-based curriculum and

assessment were present in quality programs. In their study of improving access to the arts in rural settings, Donovan and Brown's (2017) most emphasized finding was the importance of creating rural networks, which included the community, through which professional development and communication were enhanced and people were connected. Likewise, the Oregon Community Foundation (2017) emphasized building support in the community and responding to the communities' strengths and needs.

Donovan and Brown (2017) also found that a context-responsive approach to arts education was effective. This approach included building on local assets, developing relationships, and using placemaking strategies such as bringing in local artists. Likewise, Baxley et al. (2014) and the Oregon Community Foundation (2017) found that quality programs expose students to the working world of artists. Donovan and Brown (2017) and Bodilly et al. (2008) emphasized the importance of data-informed decision-making in the arts, which included the use of surveys.

When examined together, these research studies provide a picture of quality in the arts. Of these findings, one principle sticks out as I proceed in my study. As Seidel et al. (2009) and the Oregon Community Foundation (2017) emphasized, what constitutes quality in a program depends on the context and it should evolve over time as conversations about what is quality should be ongoing. My understanding of quality in the arts will be guided by the common principles in this review. However, being aware of the context, I also plan to develop an understanding of how interviewees defined quality in the arts. I will then be poised to make interpretations about the connections between arts coordination and quality in the arts.

## **Conceptual Framework**

Researchers have suggested that arts coordination is commonly found in quality arts programs and that arts coordination may improve students' access to a quality program (Bodilly et al., 2008; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999). In this study of 91 school districts that value arts education, researchers noted that even the smaller districts had coordinators. However, they were not full time and usually coordination duties were assigned to a curriculum coordinator or practicing arts teacher (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999).

Anecdotally, this pattern of coordination fits what I have experienced in rural school districts. These same researchers found that effective coordinators performed the following critical roles in school districts that value the arts: (1) engaging with key community members; (2) keeping matters pertaining to the arts on the forefront in board sessions; (3) negotiating policy between the board, district office, and schools; (4) participating alongside school leadership in the hiring of arts personnel; and (5) fostering a supportive climate for the arts in the schools and surrounding community (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999).

Though arts coordinators fulfill important roles in districts of various sizes, no researchers have examined how a rural school district coordinates its arts program. Noting the gap in the literature, I set out to examine how one rural school district coordinated the leadership of its arts program. Since this problem has not been studied, there was not a prior conceptual framework to draw from. Instead, I began by looking at

rural school leadership literature, since rurality is a dimension of the study. Then, my anecdotal knowledge of how rural arts leadership is often divided led me to examine distributed leadership. Next, I investigated the literature on professional learning and the development of leadership capacity, since along with distributed leadership, these conceptual areas are mutually reinforcing. In a pilot study, I found that a rural school district distributed leadership intentionally to coordinate its arts program. The district distributed the coordination into an arts leadership team.

**Rural school leadership.** The context of the study is a rural school district in the South. Rurality in this case is not the central feature under investigation. However, I must consider it as an aspect of the situation of leadership. The setting of the study, a rural school district, is expected to affect how leaders go about distributing leadership, increasing leadership capacity, and providing professional learning.

**Distributed leadership.** Leadership of the arts in a rural school district often falls under the umbrella of an instructional leader with help from other arts teachers. Noting this pattern of leadership, I started examining the literature surrounding distributed leadership (Leithwood et al., 2007; Harris, 2008) and proceeded from there to identify and examine potentially important components of arts coordination. Distributed leadership includes groups of people from different levels of the organization working together on direction-setting activities (Leithwood et al., 2007.)

**Professional learning.** Another conceptual component of arts coordination is professional learning. Researchers have found that building capacity hinges on providing an environment that supports continuous learning (Stoll & Bolam, 2005) and intellectual

stimulation (Louis, et al., 2010). Professional learning is also a crucial component of making change and improvements (Hall & Hord, 2015; Wagner et al., 2006).

Organizations with distributed leadership models commonly take steps to develop their people (Leithwood et al., 2007). Researchers found that formal leaders can take specific actions to develop instructional and leadership capacity in principals (Honig, 2012) and department heads (Klar, 2012). If this is true at the school level, I wondered how formal district arts leaders developed leadership capacity in arts teachers and how that facilitated the coordination of the arts.

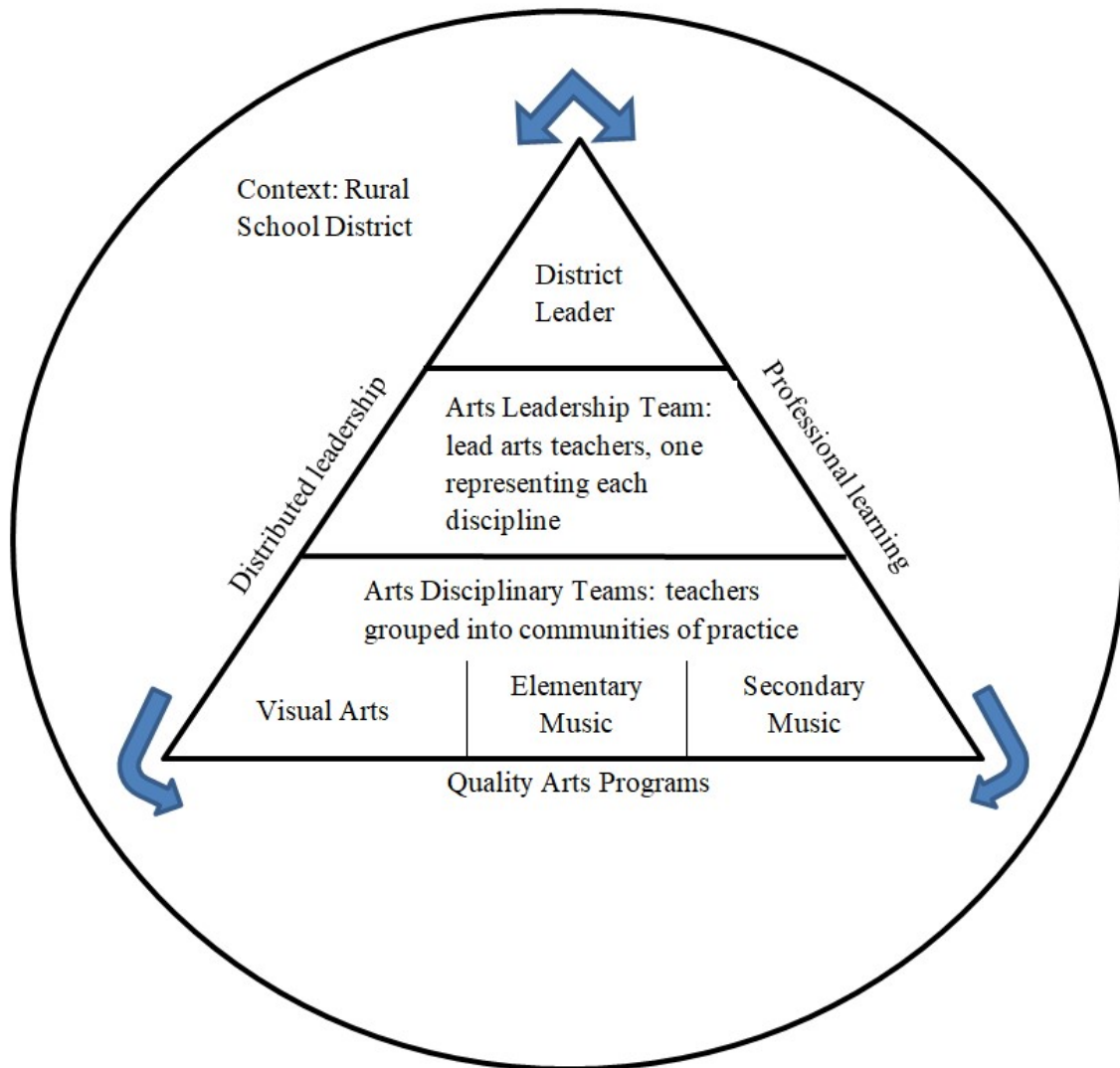
**Quality in the arts.** The last conceptual aspect of the study is quality in the arts. Seidel et al. (2009), found that although there is no one definition of quality in art programs, there are key components. As researcher, I do not attempt to judge the quality of the arts in this district. However, I am interested in how stakeholders perceive the effects of arts coordination on the quality of the program. For instance, in my pilot study, I discovered that arts teachers perceived that arts coordination helped the district arts program become more standards driven. Further, arts teachers felt they had district support for their programs.

### **Conceptual Diagram**

The conceptual diagram that follows (See Figure 1) provides a representation of arts coordination in a rural school district. The main body of the diagram is triangular and shows how a district might distribute leadership into different levels. The diagram shows the mutually reinforcing relationships between distributed leadership and professional learning. These two dimensions of arts coordination also likely impact the

quality of arts program. The last notable feature of the conceptual diagram is the depiction of different disciplinary teams at the lower level. At this level, communities may serve as a structure to unite teachers and promote individual and organizational learning.

**Figure 1: Distribution of Leadership for Arts Coordination**





## **Theoretical Perspective**

The prior conceptual framework provides a structure to organize my study. However, applying a theory to the study will highlight important aspects of coordinating arts in rural school districts. In my study, I want to move beyond describing the structure of arts coordination to understand what is happening between leaders and followers in the school district art's program. Sociocultural learning theory provides a useful lens to understanding how the district facilitated arts coordination within a community of practice. According to social learning theory, human behavior is learned through direct experience or observation. Subjects serve as models for behavior, and humans learn from their example, either deliberately or inadvertently (Bandura, 1977). Lave and Wenger (1991) asserted that learning is situated within a web of social relationships and involves participating in a community of practice. By participating in a community of practice, learners move from operating on the periphery to full participation in the community (Lave & Wenger, 1991). According to Grabinger, Aplin, and Ponnappa-Brenner (2007) the ultimate learning goal is enculturation into full membership of a community of practice. Grabinger et al. (2007) described enculturation as a process where people interact within a culture in order to solve problems or perform tasks. Participation in the community "helps develop flexible knowledge structures that facilitate problem solving and transfer in new situations" (Grabinger et al., 2007, p. 4). According to Renshaw (2003), to assume a sociocultural learning perspective means to view learners as historical and cultural members operating within a web of social activities. To assume this perspective, entails understanding that social activities are not merely supportive of

learning but are fundamental to learning. Further, interactions within these social activities give the learner the tools they need for making sense of their context (Renshaw, 2003). Using sociocultural learning theory as a theoretical lens, I seek to understand how the district facilitated social interactions between arts teachers within a community of practice and how these interactions were fundamental to their learning and the coordination of the arts program.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented a review of the literature and identified the conceptual and theoretical dimensions of the study. Some researchers found that district arts coordination is a strategy for providing access to quality programs (Bodilly et al., 2008; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999). However, no researchers have studied how to coordinate an arts program in a rural school district. In order to examine arts coordination in a rural school district, I framed the study within the following conceptual areas: rural school leadership, distributed leadership, professional learning, and quality in the arts.

Since the setting of the study is a rural and there is scant rural arts research, I consulted the rural school leadership research. Repeated themes emerged that likely apply to the leadership of rural arts programs. Rural school leadership has many dimensions, is context-responsive, and is relationship-dependent (Budge, 2006; Preston & Barnes, 2017; Preston et al., 2013). The situation of leadership in a rural setting likely impacts what is happening in the other conceptual dimensions including how leadership is distributed, the next component.

The literature on distributed leadership iterates the importance of the formal leader extending leadership opportunities to others in an organization (Harris; 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007). Thus, as a researcher, I have to identify the formal arts leaders and work from there to find to whom leadership responsibilities have been assigned. The next conceptual dimension of the study supports distributed leadership, professional learning. Organizations adopting distributed leadership also take steps to develop their people (Leithwood et al., 2007). Professional learning is not only critical to making change and improvements (Hall & Hord, 2015; Wagner et al., 2006), but researchers of arts programs also identified professional learning as strategy that may impact access to arts programs and the quality of arts programs (Donovan & Brown, 2017). As a dimension of professional learning, I also examined the literature surrounding developing capacity. Researchers have found that formal leaders can take steps to develop the capacity of principals and department heads (Honig, 2012 & Klar, 2012). Providing professional learning also requires that the district provide a structure for learning. Therefore, I examined the literature on communities of practice. A community of practice is a social structure wherein members develop a shared knowledge that may include the creation of common tools and documents (Wenger et al., 2002). New knowledge transpires in the activities and interactions of the community.

The final conceptual component of this study is quality in the arts. The overarching theme is that there is no one definition of quality, but there are key components or factors (Baxley et al., 2014; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999; Seidel et al., 2009). In addition,

common strategies are often used to improve quality and/or access in the arts (Bodilly et al., 2008; Donovan & Brown, 2017).

In this study, I attempt to understand how a rural school district distributed leadership and provided professional learning within a community of practice in order to coordinate its arts program. The four conceptual areas, rural school leadership, distributed leadership, professional learning, and quality in the arts provide a framework for the study. By applying principles from sociocultural learning theory, I may further understand how interactions between teachers in communities of practice facilitated new knowledge structures that supported and enabled arts coordination in the district. Using this theoretical framework, I attempted to move beyond isolated leadership behaviors related to arts coordination and begin to understand how “leadership practice takes shape in the interaction of leaders, followers, and their situation” (Spillane & Orlina, 2007, p. 166). I discovered arts coordination is spread through three leadership levels and transpires between the interactions of leaders and followers, as shaped by their situation.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

In this chapter, I present the research design beginning with a statement of the problem and concluding with a statement of researcher positionality. I organized the chapter into the following sections: statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, delimitations, methodology, research methods, limitations, and researcher positionality.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Though researchers (Bodilly et al., 2008; The Presidents' Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999) have found district arts coordination to be associated with the quality of an arts program, researchers have not examined how a rural school provides arts coordination. There is a dearth of research, in general, devoted to studying arts programs in rural areas (Donovan and Brown, 2017). Besides a pilot study that I conducted, there is no research on arts coordination in a rural setting. In the pilot study, I found that one rural district coordinated its arts leadership through the intentional distribution of leadership. I found that the district formed a leadership team structure that included a central leader and lead arts teachers. Despite this finding, further research is needed to understand how the district distributed arts coordination between different levels of leadership from the district to the school. Leithwood et al. (2007) described a characteristic of distributed leadership as a group of people from different levels, not just the top, working on direction-setting activities. In

this study, I examined how different levels were involved in coordinating the arts program and identified the differing roles at each level.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this study, I examined how one rural school district coordinated the leadership of its arts program. In particular, I used a distributed leadership framework to study how the district involved different levels of leadership from the district to the school level in order to coordinate the arts program. An additional purpose of the study was to investigate the roles that teachers and leaders, from various levels of leadership, fulfilled in arts coordination. A final purpose of the research was to study how distributing arts coordination impacted the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community.

### **Research Questions**

Question 1: How did one rural school district implement a distributed leadership model in order to coordinate its arts program? Question 2: How did distributing arts coordination impact the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community?

### **Delimitations**

There are some delimitations associated with this study. First, since I wanted to develop an in-depth understanding of arts leadership in one district, I constrained the selection of participants to those individuals with the most knowledge of and experience with the arts leadership in the district. To this end, I included visual and performing arts teachers who had a minimum of two years of experience serving on the arts leadership

team and/or who have taught in the district for at least five years. I also included current and former employees who currently serve or have served as district leaders with responsibility over the arts program

Another delimitation of the research is the singular focus on the coordination of leadership in a rural school district to the exclusion of matters pertaining to curriculum and instruction. Though curriculum and instruction may fall under the responsibility of a district leader, examining how they are coordinated is beyond the scope of this study. I also confined the study to district leaders at the exclusion of principals and other school-based sources of leadership.

## **Methodology**

In this study, I used a single case study with a holistic design (Yin, 2009) in order to examine how a rural school district coordinated its arts program and to investigate the perceived effect that coordination has on the quality of the program and its relationship to the community. Yin (2006) noted the usefulness of the case study method when the research sets out to answer a descriptive question. The study was designed to shed light on arts coordination in rural school districts, thus it may be characterized as an instrumental case study (Cousin, 2005). Yin (2006) also noted that good case studies include multiple sources of data, so that the evidence may be triangulated. In the next paragraph, I describe the research methods for collecting data.

## **Research Methods**

Over the course of six months, I conducted interviews, observed meetings and events, and gathered relevant documents in order to collect data related to the research

questions. In the subsequent sections, I provide information pertaining to site selection, data collection, and data analysis.

**Site selection.** I conducted research in the Lakeview School District (all names are pseudonyms), since it was a good fit for studying rural arts coordination. First, the district was rurally situated in the Southeastern portion of the United States. Since there is not a universal way to describe rural schools or communities (Budge, 2006), I described statistics and characteristics of this district in order to provide a better understanding of the study context. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), this district was rural: fringe (41). This locale code, as defined by NCES, means that the rural area is 5 or fewer miles from an urbanized area and 2.5 miles or less from an urban cluster. The United States Census Bureau (2015) described rural as an area that lies outside of an urban cluster (2,500–50,000) or an urbanized area (50,000 or more). The district's ten schools are located in locations inside and outside of a main city with a population of approximately 9,000. The total population in the school district zone is about 35, 000. That population is spread over approximately 350 square miles. Some of the district's schools are more rurally situated than others, as one of the elementary schools is located in a community of around 150. The district serves approximately 6,000 students in pre-K -12<sup>th</sup> grade. This school district office is structured similarly to other school districts. As discovered through a search on the district's webpage, the district includes the following departments: Administrative and Athletic Services, Finance and Operations, Superintendent's Office, Human Resources, Federal Programs, Special Education, Technology, and Teaching and Learning. The pattern for each of these



departments is to have one director and two to five support personnel. In total, there are approximately eight department leaders and 22 support staff members. That means that the district office employs approximately 30 individuals.

The district has a history of providing arts leadership to its programs. However, the avenues of leadership have changed through the years. Approximately three decades ago, this district employed a full-time district arts coordinator, who worked in the teaching and learning department. The individual was an end-of career arts educator. When she left, another former arts teacher coordinated the arts while assuming other district leadership responsibilities. After the latter district leader assumed a new role in the district, the district adopted the current distributed model of arts leadership.

The pilot study I conducted provided some reasoning behind the district's current model for arts leadership. A former art's leader stated that about 12 years ago the district decided to form a leadership team, modeled much like ones required to qualify for large state-sponsored arts grants. The leadership team consisted of a district leader who worked alongside lead arts teachers in each discipline to coordinate the program. In the pilot study, I also confirmed that the arts leadership team structure had been in place for at least 12 years. As mentioned, prior to the implementation of a leadership team, a district leader, with a strong arts background, independently coordinated the program. In the pilot, I also found that since the formation of the leadership team, district leaders took action to develop leadership capacity among the arts teachers. The assistant superintendent sent lead arts teachers to professional development and gave them opportunities to lead other teachers. The assistant superintendent also provided

professional learning that was content specific. The characteristics of the school district and the recent pilot study findings confirm the appropriateness of the site given the focus of the current study (Wages, 2018).

This district has an above average arts program for its size. In the pilot, lead teachers stated this opinion concerning the program as a whole. Arts programs at Lakeview School District have received accolades for their performances and exhibits at state and national competitions and in the local community. For example, the high school band recently qualified to compete in a national marching band competition. This district has worked to increase access to arts programs, which was confirmed in the pilot study. They even have a growing strings program, which is rare for rural school districts. Further, the high school performing arts groups consistently receive superior ratings at festivals and competitions. Their students also consistently qualify for regional and all state chorus, strings, and band. Due to the location, history of arts coordination, and noted characteristics, this school district is an appropriate site for studying rural arts coordination.

**Data collection.** In a distributed leadership model, a central leader is responsible for assigning tasks and extending leadership duties to people in the organization (Tian, Risku, & Collin, 2015). Therefore, I interviewed a district leader, who was formerly in charge of the arts program, since rural arts programs often fall under a district leader's umbrella of responsibility. Using a semi-structured interview protocol (See Appendix A), I opened with general questions to establish the biographical context for this district leader (Bevan, 2014). Then, I asked questions to find out how arts leadership was

intentionally distributed and structured in the school district (Leithwood et al., 2007). In addition to interviewing a district leader, I also interviewed multiple arts teachers, participating on the arts leadership team and some not. For all interviewees I used the same protocol in order to pursue a line of inquiry (Yin, 2009) related to distributed leadership, leadership capacity, and professional learning. See Table 1 for a description of the interviewees and their most recent job assignment. To maintain anonymity, I did not give complete descriptions of the interviewees' job history in the district or the number of years in their position.

Table 3.1

Description of Interviewees		
Pseudonym	Most recent location	Most recent job assignment
Clara	District Office	Grant writer, Art and Health coordinator
Ben	Elementary 1	Principal
Elizabeth	Elementary 1	General Music (Lead teacher)
Gina	Elementary 2	Elementary music (former lead teacher)
Lori	Middle School 1	Visual arts
Wendy	Middle School 2	Visual arts (lead teacher)

I conducted two interviews with a former arts coordinator (Clara), two interviews with a lead visual arts teacher (Wendy), two interviews with a middle school visual arts teacher (Lori), two interviews with a former lead elementary music teacher (Gina), one interview with the current lead elementary music teacher (Elizabeth), and one interview with a principal (Ben). To cover all the topics related to the conceptual framework, I conducted two interviews with a few key participants. In the second interview, I also followed up on key points from the first interview. In total, I conducted nine interviews between six individuals. Interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio recorded, then transcribed. I also made field notes to document and reflect on the interview process (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Observation is another source of evidence frequently used in a case study methodology (Yin, 2009). For this inquiry, I observed an arts meeting, an art display, and two performances. Though few in number, they provided corroborating evidence to confirm information about the coordination of arts leadership and the quality of the arts program in the school district. I used a semi-structured protocol (Yin, 2009) to guide my observations. It included a space to describe the main purpose of the meeting or event. The intent of documenting my observations was to gain information to corroborate data from interviews and documents (Yin, 2009). The designed protocol also provided a place to note and describe activities that occurred during the observation. In addition, there was a checklist to note what tools and materials were used in the meeting or event (See Appendix B).

Spillane et al. (2010) found that material artifacts are central to instructional leadership. As they explained, these tools and artifacts are not just a backdrop, but may define leadership practice. They also noted that organizational interactions are shaped by tools and organizational routines (Spillane et al., 2010). I collected organizational artifacts to provide evidence of how leadership practice unfolded between the interactions of people in the organization. I left the observations open enough to note unexpected findings and capture additional information about my topic (Yin, 2009). I also made field notes during the observations, and expanded these as soon as possible after the observations (Emerson et al., 1995).

Lastly, I collected relevant documents related to arts coordination in this district. Yin (2009) explained that the primary importance of document collection is to corroborate information from various sources. In order to verify information gleaned from my interviews and observations, I examined the following types of documents: meeting agendas; printed and online news articles; printed programs; professional development materials; and planning documents.

**Data analysis.** I used an iterative analytic process in order to identify patterns and themes in the data. I began with deductive analysis based on an initial coding scheme that I developed from the research questions, conceptual framework, and theoretical framework (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). My initial thematic codes were *district arts leadership*, *arts leadership team*, and *arts disciplinary team*. After using these initial codes, I subdivided these areas to identify the specific roles of each leadership level. I thematically coded interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents, to look for

relationships between the data (Brenner, 2006). I created a data matrix to organize my findings thematically, and as a tool for analysis (Miles, et al., 2013). I used inductive analyses to look for and interpret emerging patterns in the data (Brenner, 2006). Using inductive analysis helped me identify unexpected findings in the data that were beyond the scope of my conceptual framework. In order to strengthen the validity of my case study, I triangulated the data from multiple sources, thereby corroborating repeating themes (Yin, 2009). I also conducted member checks with key research participants at different points in the research in order to check emergent and concluding findings (Creswell, 2007).

### **Positionality Statement**

As researchers, we must recognize it is impossible to be totally objective in our research. Instead, as Peshkin (1988) explained, “one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed” (p. 17). Therefore, we need to develop an acute awareness of how the self infiltrates the research process (Peshkin, 1988). Professionally, I have been a public music educator for 19 years. However, since beginning my doctoral program, I am increasingly interested in studying problems I encounter in my own practice.

I became interested in this research topic because of my experiences working as a music educator in two rural districts. After seeing the disparity in quality between the two arts programs, I realized the potential impact leadership may have on the quality of programs. I have firsthand knowledge of how a district can invest in its art teachers by developing leadership and instructional capacity. As a music educator and arts leader in public schools, I bring my knowledge and personal experiences to my research, which

has helped me to build trust among the people I study. In addition, it has helped me to understand and interpret their stories.

As an insider in the arts education world, I care deeply about providing high quality and equitable arts experiences to all students. As a researcher, I can use professional experience and intuition to guide my research. However, I must also use sound research methods to ensure my findings are legitimate and not simply opinions derived from my experience. I engaged in an ongoing self-reflection process to identify my assumptions and potential biases. To counter these, I used sound research methods and remained sensitive to those I researched (Bredo, 2006).

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the research design for the study. The case study methodology is useful in examining descriptive questions such as the ones in this study, since I seek an understanding of how one rural school district coordinated its arts program. In addition, the site selection is appropriate since the district is rurally situated and has a long history of arts leadership and coordination. As discussed, I collected data from multiple sources including interviews, observations, and document collection. This triangulation of sources will enable me to corroborate repeating themes (Yin, 2009). As described, I used an iterative analytic approach to interpret the data, beginning with deductive coding scheme and progressing to inductive coding as needed to interpret emerging themes. I present the results of my study in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine how one rural school district implemented a distributed leadership model in order to coordinate its arts program. In particular, the research focused on how the district involved different levels of leadership from the district to the school level in order to coordinate the program. In addition, the study also investigated the differing roles that teachers and leaders took related to arts coordination. Another purpose of the study was to examine how distributing arts coordination impacted the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community. Data from interviews, observations, and documents were collected and analyzed thematically in order to answer the two research questions. In this chapter, I present the research findings thematically in terms of the research questions.

#### **Research Question One**

*Question 1: How did one rural school district implement a distributed leadership model in order to coordinate its arts program?* To answer research question one, a qualitative approach was employed. I conducted five interviews with lead teachers, two interviews with non-lead teachers, and two interviews with a district leader. I also interviewed one principal. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. After multiple readings of the data, major themes were identified and color-coded. The initial themes were district leadership, arts leadership team, planning for special events, professional learning, community connections, and quality in the arts. Then, data were sorted according to their codes and organized into tables. Some themes were subdivided for



further analysis. Data from observations and documents were also analyzed utilizing these major themes. The table below summarizes findings one and two.

Table 4.1

*Leadership Levels and Roles in Arts Coordination*

<b>Leadership Level</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Quantity of members</b>	<b>Primary Role</b>
Level 1	Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction served as the district level leader over the arts program. Some years she was assisted by an intermediary district leader	1-2 District leaders	Coordinator: provided the infrastructure for teams to meet; coordinated professional development; communicated to stakeholders regarding the arts program; and provided extra resources
Level 2	Arts leadership team consists of the lead arts teachers representing every discipline who meet with the district leader above	3-4 lead arts teachers	Communicator: connected communication between district leader and arts disciplinary teams, facilitates arts disciplinary teams
Level 3	Arts disciplinary teams are groups of arts teachers (elementary music, visual arts, secondary music) that meet regularly	3 teams made up of 5-10 members	Content Specialists: Led professional learning, planned and coordinated special events, and engaged in collegial discussions

## **Levels of Leadership and Roles in Arts Coordination**

Finding one is the district intentionally distributed arts leadership into three levels which were the following: district leadership, an arts leadership team, and arts disciplinary teams. Finding two is the district leadership, arts leadership team, and disciplinary teams played important but differing roles in coordinating the arts program, while the disciplinary team was most prolific in performing arts coordination. At the highest leadership level, there was an assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, who was ultimately in charge of the arts program. She served as the coordinator of the program. There was also an appointed arts leadership team consisting of a lead teacher from the following areas: elementary music, secondary music, and visual arts. These lead teachers were the communicators. Finally, there were disciplinary teams that met regularly, which were led by an appointed lead arts teacher. At this level, teachers were the content specialists. This leadership structure existed on the periphery of school leadership. Principals were not directly involved in any of these levels of leadership. According to the principal, who was interviewed, he mainly provided leadership in areas pertaining to school-based concerns. In the subsequent sections, I present the data to support the above findings. The data are organized thematically according the level of leadership and highlights the differing roles of each level of leadership.

**District leadership.** For the last 12 years, an assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction has supervised the arts program in this school district, though the arts program was but one of many programs in her purview. It is important to note

that during half of these years, the assistant superintendent utilized the services of the district's grant writer to help provide district leadership to the arts. The grant writer too had other responsibilities besides the arts program. The assistant superintendent maintained authority over the arts program even when the district's grant writer assisted with district leadership roles. Henceforth, I use the term "district leadership" to refer to the assistant superintendent working in tandem with the grant coordinator. When citing evidence, I use the term "assistant superintendent" only if it refers to a specific leader in that role.

District leadership fulfilled the role of coordinator of the program. In this role, district leaders primarily provided the infrastructure to establish arts leadership and disciplinary teams; coordinated professional development; communicated important information to teachers, principals, and the community regarding the arts program; and provided extra resources beyond school budgets. In performing the stated roles, the district leaders provided consistent support for the arts program. Interviewees repeatedly emphasized that they felt supported by district leadership. As one lead visual arts teacher explained, "You know, anytime anyone needs anything, you call them and you go see the district office and get what you need. Yeah, it's pretty much an open-door policy." A lead music teacher described the many ways she felt supported saying:

I think they support us by giving us opportunity to meet with each other on designated professional development days. They listen, which is huge. They listen to our needs and try to accommodate us as best they can. Not just financially, but also with just supporting what we do and carving out time for what we need.

District leadership was central in providing time for the arts teachers to meet as a leadership team and as arts disciplinary teams. The district leader carved out professional development time for arts to meet in disciplinary teams for meetings and professional development.

The district leader was also responsible for communicating matters pertaining to the arts. As later described in the findings, the district leader communicated to the arts leadership team about arts initiatives and special events. The district leader also kept principals informed of what was happening in the arts. For instance, the assistant superintendent would communicate which professional days were reserved for the arts to meet in disciplines in lieu of attending school-based professional development sessions. From document analysis, evidence was found supporting that the assistant superintendent communicated to the community about upcoming arts programs and displays. In two different publications on different years, she made a statement inviting the community to attend a district-wide art show. The assistant superintendent used that opportunity to also talk about the importance of the arts and what the arts mean to students. For example, she said that the students in the district are encouraged to tell their story through the arts, not just in written and verbal expression.

District leaders also provided resources that were beyond what schools were able to offer. Though a specific plan for providing extra resources was not uncovered, I did find evidence of the district utilizing the grant writer to help acquire additional resources. According to Elizabeth, she usually received several hundred dollars from her school budget to provide materials for her elementary music classroom. She stated that most

schools had a similar budget. In addition, she reported that over a period of time she had received many grants to provide additional resources. Gina, a former lead teacher, stated, “I really appreciate the support I get from district administrators for the arts. ...mostly I appreciate having someone who helps us write grants to get equipment and start programs with students that we wouldn’t have otherwise.” A non-lead teacher, Lori also explained how her program was supported through grant funding “We had a grant writer who helped us to get funds. With those grants, it really made a huge difference for us.” Teacher after teacher reported that they felt they could call the assistant superintendent and get what they needed, that she would find a source or work with the district’s grant coordinator to provide funding. Teachers explained how the school budget did not always provide what they needed, but they always felt they could ask district leadership and “she almost always said yes,” according to Elizabeth. An assistant superintendent once provided literacy money for music teachers and visual arts teachers. On a regular basis she sent them picture books and read-alouds to help integrate reading into their classrooms. As one music teacher explained, “So, almost every month I’d find a surprise in my mailbox and I’d have a couple of new picture books.” District leaders provided additional resources to meet the needs of arts teachers across the school district.

Though there were turnover among district leadership and among teachers, the feeling of consistent district support remained. The distributed leadership structure, including the art leadership team and arts disciplinary teams, remained intact through the tenure of two different assistant superintendents. Elizabeth described how things in a recent year had changed with a new assistant superintendent at the helm of the arts

program. In her interview, she explained, “I have felt very supported in the arts the whole time I’ve been in the district, even though that support was little less structured this year. The support is there, and I feel like it has been there consistently.”

District leadership consistently supported the arts program with time and resources by providing infrastructure for arts teachers to meet in teams and by providing additional resources for arts classrooms. In addition, the district leader provided consistent communication with principals, arts teachers, and the community. In fulfilling these roles, district leadership provided consistent support to the arts program, that was noted by interviewees in the study.

**Arts leadership team.** About 12 years ago, the district implemented a distributed leadership structure to coordinate its arts programs. Under the direction of the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, the district formed an arts leadership team consisting of lead arts teachers from every arts area. The members of the arts leadership team were full time arts teachers who were appointed by the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction to the position. For the past ten years, lead teachers received a small stipend for their position. When asked how the lead teachers were chosen, interviewees agreed that lead teachers were hand-picked by the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction according to their experience, status as national board certified teacher, tenure, and/or quality of teaching. The assistant superintendent provided the infrastructure for the arts leadership team to meet by scheduling quarterly meetings. Though the goal was quarterly meetings, they often met more often and, in some years, less often. In her interview, a lead visual arts teacher, Wendy, described how the team

met four to five times a year and the information gleaned was passed along to others on the disciplinary team. She explained,

We would relay that information to other teachers in our areas. That worked really well for communication and for us being able to voice our needs to her [the assistant superintendent], then for her to let us know from the administrative level, what we needed to focus on as teachers.

In the arts leadership team meetings, the assistant superintendent would discuss initiatives, events, and other concerns that needed to be communicated or discussed with other arts teachers in their discipline. Due to this primary role, members of the leadership team may be termed, the communicators. These lead teachers were responsible for communicating these things to their team members. In that process of communication, the leads would interpret information from the assistant superintendent and make it relevant and more meaningful to their disciplinary team. Wendy explained it as follows “I can relay that information from the district office, because a lot of times, having someone that teachers are basically in the ditches with you, they have a better understanding.”

Documents that were obtained show the pathway of communication to disciplinary team members and to the superintendent. For instance, an email reminding visual arts teachers of their upcoming PD was sent to teachers on the team and copied to the assistant superintendent to keep her informed as well.

Interviewees reported various reasons for the establishment of an arts leadership team. According to one former district leader, Clara, the district adopted an arts leadership team to model the norm established by grant programs in the state. In

particular, one large arts grant required the establishment of an arts leadership team with representation from all disciplines. Though this district did not apply for that particular grant, the district leader believed establishing the structure of a leadership team was vital to be considered for other types of state grant funding. Clara also explained how having an arts leadership team structure gave teachers a voice and an opportunity to govern the leadership of their program. She further explained that the primary role of the lead arts teachers was communicating concerns and needs from the district level to the individual arts teachers and reciprocally passing along communication and concerns from peer teachers to the district office.

Lead arts teachers were responsible for communicating important information to their disciplinary team. Communication between lead arts teachers and their respective disciplinary team regularly occurred via planned professional development days, arts meetings, electronic mail, and in recent years, through Google file sharing. The arts leadership team structure provided the pathway of communication to pass along information between district leaders to lead arts teachers, who then passed along information to other art teachers in their same discipline, who were not on the leadership team. Clara described the arts leadership team as “bringing people together, bridging gaps, and making sure that everyone was on the same page.” With these pathways of communication established, the district could better accomplish a number of tasks related to the arts program: alignment of the curriculum and teaching to the standards, planning for special events, and communicating state and district initiatives. In fact, when asked about the primary role of the arts leadership team in her interview, Clara stated, “number



one, be sure that arts instruction is quality and standards-based. When I started, there were a lot of people doing their own thing, and it had nothing to do with standards.” The other interviewees likewise spoke about the importance of communicating high expectations for implementing standards-based curriculum. The arts leadership team established this pathway of communication and served as a filter through which information from the assistant superintendent flowed to the teachers. From all accounts, the arts leadership team was not a decision-making body. Instead, they communicated information to their respective disciplinary teams, where discussion and decisions were made in the best interest of all arts teachers.

The establishment of the arts leadership team also gave specific teachers an opportunity to lead their arts department. The leadership team served as a mechanism to develop leadership capacity. Members of the team, in effect, coordinated their arts disciplinary team. In doing so, their leadership capacity was strengthened.

**Arts disciplinary teams.** Arts disciplinary teams formed the next level of leadership and were vital to coordinating the arts program. Coinciding with the beginning of the arts leadership team, the district established arts disciplinary teams that were led by an appointed lead arts teacher. Through this study, I found that the arts disciplinary teams regularly met for professional development, planning special events, and engaging in collegial dialogue centered on various content specific topics. The members of this team, the arts teachers, were content specialists. The activities they engaged in centered on their arts content area and facilitated the coordination of their arts discipline. Disciplinary teams consisted of one lead teacher, and four to ten other peer teachers in the same arts

discipline. The lead teacher facilitated meetings, made meeting agendas, and relayed information between the district leader and other teachers. After meetings, lead teachers followed up and reported to the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, most often in an email. Although lead teachers were in charge of their group, Wendy explained how she considered herself their equal and that they truly had a collaborative relationship. Lori shared how different arts teachers took the lead on different initiatives. Through these opportunities, teachers were able to build their leadership capacity.

While the arts leadership team was instrumental in establishing pathways of communication and relaying important information, the work of arts disciplinary teams was at the heart of arts coordination, which was an unexpected finding. Arts disciplinary teams performed vital roles related to coordinating their content areas: professional learning, planning and coordinating special events, and engaging in collegial discussions. Within these teams, teachers discussed and made decisions related to their arts discipline. Discussion topics were often centered on scheduling issues, new technology, curriculum and standards, and current events. Disciplinary teams performed the legwork for district-wide arts events. Lead and non-lead arts teachers took on leadership roles that would have, in a larger district, perhaps gone to the district arts coordinator, such as publicity for special events, scheduling, or serving as a community spokesperson.

In this school district, all of the arts areas met in disciplinary teams, most recently grouped as follows: elementary music; visual arts; and secondary music, which included chorus, band, and strings. For the sake of this analysis, I examined the work of the elementary music and visual arts disciplinary teams. One reason for the narrowed focus

on these two teams is the stability of the elementary music and visual arts teams compared to the secondary music team. There was less turnover of staff in these teams and greater availability to participate in the research. In addition, I established in the pilot study that these teams have operated consistently for at least 12 years. Confining my research to just two teams allowed me to collect richer data regarding the roles of disciplinary teams. In the next sections, I describe the structure of disciplinary teams and their primary roles.

***Structure of the disciplinary team.*** The elementary music disciplinary team consisted of every general music teacher in the district (n=6). Similarly, the visual arts team was made up of every visual art from elementary through high school (n=9). These teams met regularly, rotating between different school locations. The visual arts teachers interviewed indicated that they met almost monthly and on designated professional development days. Music teachers indicated that they met several times a semester including on professional development days. The district leader, the assistant superintendent of instruction, was instrumental in providing the support for these groups to meet. She reserved a portion of the professional development days for disciplinary teams to meet. She also communicated to principals about these meetings and prioritized time for arts to meet in disciplinary teams.

***Role of arts disciplinary teams.*** In order to understand the role of disciplinary teams, I interviewed multiple lead and non-lead teachers, and analyzed documents related to their meetings. This analysis yielded three key themes related to disciplinary teams and their work of coordinating an arts program. First, the disciplinary team was a unit for

professional learning. Second, disciplinary teams were vital to planning and enacting district-wide arts events. Third, disciplinary teams were a venue for rich collegial discussions. In the next section, I describe each of these roles, in turn.

*Professional learning.* The district provided regular professional development (PD) within the elementary music and visual arts disciplinary team. Gina shared, “Some of the best learning opportunities happen on staff development days. We usually have three days a year that we meet in our departments for PD.” Analysis of data yielded three main methods of providing PD. First, the district regularly brought in specialists to provide PD to the individual disciplinary teams. A second format for PD was to send lead or other teachers to a conference or training and have them return and share with their team following the conclusion of the training. A final form of professional development within the team unit included sending an entire disciplinary team to an off-campus training.

The district often brought in specialists to provide content-specific training for disciplinary teams. When interviewed, general music teachers reported over the last five years that they had training by world drumming specialists, Orff specialists, steel drum specialists, and Quaver Music representatives. At times, specialists were brought in to work with gifted and talented (GT) music students. The music teachers were encouraged to attend and participate as a part of their training. Gina explained, “we had a percussionist come and he worked with the GT kids on making instruments out of PVC pipes, flip-flops, all sorts of interesting things. I learned a lot from that experience.” Elizabeth reported that the district provided training in Quaver Music and brought in

experts from Nashville. She shared that Quaver Music is an online curriculum that is constantly updated and includes a vast array of resources. She explained, “The program allows kids to be very interactive with the software and the technology. The Quaver software has been a way to integrate technology and allow the kids to be hands on.” She echoed the importance of training teachers to use the many features of the software.

Visual arts teachers also met within disciplinary teams for professional learning. A visual arts non-lead teacher, Lori, shared how in the past, they took a survey of visual arts teachers to gauge their professional development needs. Then, the lead teacher at that time communicated the needs to the assistant superintendent. The assistant superintendent then made a plan to provide workshops to address the needs of the visual arts team. Lori recalled, “They even brought in professors from the university to give workshops on PD days; it was one of the most beneficial things that I remember.”

Another method of providing PD within disciplinary teams was to send individual teachers to various trainings and have them return and share with their group. The district was especially focused on keeping abreast of new initiatives handed down from the state. As Elizabeth explained, “They provide training for us. They want to make sure that if there is something that is going on statewide or nationwide, they let us know and they provide the funds and the means to get there.” For instance, Gina explained how she was sent as a representative of her team to receive training on new visual and performing arts standards. She explained, “They have given us professional development opportunities that are offered by the state. This past school year I had three days in the fall. I went...and participated in workshops on understanding the new standards for fine arts.”

Other lead teachers corroborated her account as they had also attended these state-led standards trainings with other teachers and arts coordinators from other school districts. The district arts leader required the lead arts teachers to conduct training sessions on the new standards with their disciplinary team. The lead teachers attended the state-led training together as Gina stated, “The art representative from our leadership team and also the secondary music representative, we all went together, and it was great to have the chance to really see what was happening at the state level.” At the time of this training, the state was a year away from adopting the new standards, which were in a different format than prior standards. Therefore, sending representatives to the state trainings and having them lead trainings for other teachers was critical to ensuring all teachers understood and knew how to implement the new standards. Allowing lead teachers and others to return from professional development sessions and share with the group provided an opportunity for these teachers to increase their leadership capacity.

Arts teachers often attended conferences hosted by professional associations in order to receive content-specific training. Music and visual arts teachers reported favorably on receiving support to attend these conferences. The district granted professional learning days for teachers to attend and even paid for one or more teacher per arts area to attend their conference during some years. Gina shared, “The conferences being accessible is the biggest professional development that the district has provided.” Elizabeth supported this statement saying, “I think they really try to support our travel to conferences for all teachers in the arts.” The caveat is that teachers are expected to share something with their disciplinary team following the conference.

A final way the district provided professional development was sending the entire disciplinary team off campus to a workshop. Recently, the visual arts team attended a training in a larger school district at a performing arts magnet school. A lead visual arts teacher shared the value in this experience. Wendy shared, “We got to see how they were doing things differently and better, especially with expectations. It’s not a district concern so much as it is, guys, how can we raise the bar?” Attending as a disciplinary unit, the teachers were able to share a similar experience and continue conversations related to the training. In this case, the discussion centered on how to raise expectations. The elementary music teachers were recently sent to a drumming workshop held off campus. The all-day workshop engaged teachers in drumming technique and curriculum. Elizabeth shared the agenda and her notes from this training, which evidenced connections to the standards for general music. The training was particularly valuable for the two new music teachers in the school district.

*Planning district-wide events.* Another key role of the arts disciplinary team was to plan and enact district-wide events. Both the visual arts and elementary music disciplinary teams were involved in planning district wide arts events. The visual arts teachers planned the Arts Portfolio Day that they conducted for about seven successive years. Lori explained, “We set aside a day for fifth grade and for high schoolers to come in with their sketch books and their art products that they had created. We set up professional stations where we photographed their artwork.” Each student received their portfolio on a compact disc. She explained that all the visual arts teachers helped in planning and executing Portfolio Day.

Another joint effort by the visual arts teachers was planning and executing various community art displays. Lori explained, “teachers worked together on various projects especially within the community, outreach projects to get the art out there.” In line with this goal, she reported that the arts teachers had a rotating display featuring a piece of artwork from every school, which was on permanent display at the district office. Arts teachers would meet and change out the frames once a semester. She also shared they had a community art display about five years ago, that rotated between different community locations. The display system was acquired through grant funding. In this instance, one visual arts teacher headed the efforts of changing out the artwork. The district leader, at that time, helped with transporting the display system from one location to another. More recently, the visual arts teachers have held a spring art show at the district office and invited the community to attend. The district moved its office in recent years and now has a large lobby space conducive to displaying art. All of the arts teachers in the district participated in displaying their work at this show. As I observed, the show included 3-D pieces on tables in the lobby and panels lining two-main halls off the lobby. The work displayed the breadth of the curriculum from 3-D sculpture to watercolor and ink. This art show was advertised in local online news venues and included a statement by the assistant superintendent as mentioned prior.

The elementary music team similarly worked to plan and execute special events. Gina stated, “In meetings, we plan for events. It is wonderful to have that time for arts programs to meet; we share ideas with each other.” The elementary music teachers planned an organ concert for fourth grade students. For the past eight years, all fourth



graders had taken a field trip hear a pipe organ concert held at local church. Initially, the concerts featured mostly organ repertoire. Through the years, the concert began to incorporate more than just organ pieces. It also included the performance of various other small vocal and instrumental ensembles. All of the general music teachers were involved in some aspect of the concert, whether playing the organ, directing a small ensemble, or performing another instrument. According to Elizabeth, during the most recent year, even some of the classroom teachers were involved in performing. One of the music teachers put together a PowerPoint lesson about the pipe organ that was emailed out to music teachers prior to the event. The lead music teacher asked that the lesson be taught to prepare students for the organ concert. The PowerPoint included slides about the different types of pipes and classification of sounds on the pipe organ. It also featured a slide naming the parts of the organ.

For the past ten years, a major effort of the visual and performing arts department was planning a district wide arts festival. According to music and arts teachers, the festival was held yearly, though in recent years, the district held it every other year. The venue for the arts festival has changed throughout the years as has the schedule. In online news venues, I found documentation of this event, which included schedules and venue locations. In its inaugural year, the festival was held in the downtown area of the city, and all events were scheduled to occur on one day. There were performances by all schools and music groups scattered throughout the day. Lori reported that visual art from every school was displayed in the windows of downtown storefronts. She also reported that in other years, the district spread the festival out to last for a whole week. Performances

were scheduled throughout the districts' schools and some community venues, while artwork remained in the downtown area. For example, according to a news publication, the orchestra played at the local museum. According to interviewees, artwork typically remained on display for one to two weeks. As evidenced in news sources, recently the district partnered with a new local venue to use their space for the event, and it returned to a one-day all-inclusive event.

In planning the arts festival event, Lori reported that typically the assistant superintendent was in charge of deciding the date and reserving the location. Planning for other aspects of the event took place in disciplinary teams. Lori reported how their team formed different committees to handle different aspects of the event saying, "One of the pieces was publicity and I handled publicity for the event. There were one or two years that I coordinated the art display." She also explained some of the details they had to work out during their planning. They had to determine the dimensions of their display area and how much space each school was allotted. Recently, the visual arts disciplinary team met and mounted their work together. Wendy said it was "very efficient" as they discussed needs and concerns as they were mounting their work.

Again, different teachers on the disciplinary teams took charge of planning different aspects of the arts festival. Gina explained her role was to schedule performances and communicate to other arts teachers and the district office about the schedule. While a different music teacher, Elizabeth, created a poster to advertise the event. Elizabeth reported that in elementary music meetings, teachers decided the order they wanted to perform in, how many pieces each school would perform, and they would

often chose a joint vocal selection that all performers could sing together. Teachers would discuss their musical selections and which instruments they were using to be sure that the elementary music portion of the festival was representative of the general music curriculum as a whole. For example, Elizabeth had a recorder group play, while Gina featured a number from a musical her students had performed. A district leader also expressed the desire for the arts festival to reflect the arts program as whole and showcase the results of a standards-based curriculum.

*Collegial discussions.* Arts disciplinary teams served as a venue for collegial discussions centered on a variety of content related topics. One lead teacher, Wendy shared:

I think sometimes just having a group of like-minded people with you, you can pick through things like the standards, figure out what does this mean? I think if we don't have that time together... a document like the new standards could be very difficult for someone to interpret.

Meeting as disciplinary teams allowed elementary music and visual arts teachers to engage in collegial discussion surrounding standards, curriculum, and other content-specific concerns.

Elizabeth reported that in a recent year, at one of their disciplinary meetings held on a PD day, she shared information about backwards design and curriculum development. Her presentation led into a discussion and subsequent meetings to work on updating the general music curriculum. She stated, “We worked on a checklist for the grade levels because the curriculum guide that elementary music had was one that was

done 15, 20 years ago.” She shared that they were continuing to work on a skills development checklist for general music. To develop this list, they had discussions about what skill set a fifth-grade music student should master. Using the standards as a guideline, they planned to continue to develop this checklist. The lead teacher also said they collaborated to develop a plan for their Student Learning Objective (SLO). Gina shared that elementary music team members had regular contact with one another. She also reported the value in coming together as a team to share ideas. Some of the discussed topics from prior years were adding learning stations to music classrooms and standards implementation, especially after the adoption of new standards in 2017-2018. Aside from curriculum and standards, the teachers reported that the topic of conversation in disciplinary meetings was often new initiatives, special events, and/or content-specific concerns.

Visual arts teachers also reported collegial discussions in their disciplinary team centered on curriculum and standards, special events, and content-specific concerns. Lori explained how they got together about 10 years ago and wrote their curriculum. They examined curriculums from other districts and discussed the components of an accomplished arts district. For instance, Wendy stated:

The Spring Hill district (pseudonym) had developed a list of these accomplishments and what is the expectation for teachers, arts teachers, as far as leadership, as far as curriculum, as far as the district is concerned. We went through those pieces in our meetings.

A non-lead teacher also reported how the visual arts team created a curriculum for gifted and talented art. In disciplinary meetings, they examined and discussed established curriculums from other locations. They ended up modeling their curriculum after a large district from another state.

The visual arts disciplinary team often discussed concerns pertaining to the schedule or lack of supplies. A lead teacher reported that it helped to have that discussion within the disciplinary team. She explained that it helped to reframe concerns and to discuss them with the team members, who understood the nuances of the concern. Then, in some cases the lead arts teachers would speak to the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction on behalf of the visual arts team.

The visual arts team also met socially outside of school hours and engaged in work related discussion. Lori discussed the value in having those conversations outside of school hours saying, “I think it was great when we had a backyard hamburger; we got together and created those ideas while we were relaxed and getting to know each other better.” This group also celebrated life events together such as engagements and marriages. She also reported the regular communication via text messaging in which they would work out details of upcoming events such as community displays.

In my observation of a fine arts meeting, I witnessed the collegial atmosphere. Led by the assistant superintendent, the meeting was attended by all fine arts teachers in the district. As expected, teachers of the same discipline sat together in the meeting even though they were not instructed to do so. Well after the conclusion of the meeting, teachers sat amongst their disciplinary teams and engaged in collegial discussion. I sat

with the elementary music team and continued my observation and field notes. Their conversations included end of the year programs, discussion about a music inventory system, planning for the next school year, and summer school.

**Principal leadership.** Principals were not directly involved with coordinating the arts program and, thus, are not described in these other three levels of leadership. As one principal, Ben, explained, “The arts really are in a separate lane led by the district office.” He further explained that discussions with the arts teachers at his school were centered around school-based concerns such as classroom issues, behavior management, and upcoming school programs. He explained that the district office takes the lead on matters pertaining to arts curriculum and scheduling professional development. He also reported that the assistant superintendent communicated to him about planned professional development, and upcoming arts events. A non-lead arts teacher confirmed that principals were kept informed by the assistant superintendent. Lori stated, “We also had the principals on board. They knew what was going on, because they were informed at the principal’s meetings, because you gotta get their support for what goes on in the arts.” The district leader was instrumental in providing communication to the principals and keeping them informed in matters pertaining to the arts.

In this section, I presented the findings for research question one of the study. In summary, this school district intentionally distributed arts coordination into three levels which were district leadership, an arts leadership team, and arts disciplinary teams. At each of these levels, teachers and leaders played differing but important roles in coordinating the arts program. These roles by their respective level can be summarized as

the coordinator, the communicators, and the content specialists. Working in harmony, teachers and leaders in these roles provided infrastructure and opportunities for collaboration which facilitated the coordination of the arts program.

## **Research Question Two**

*Question 2: According to arts teachers and leaders, how did distributing arts coordination impact the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community?*

To answer research question two, I used a qualitative approach. Again, I collected data from five interviews with lead teachers, two interviews with non-lead teachers, and two interviews with a district leader, and one interview with a principal. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Then, the data were read and re-read to devise major themes, which were then color-coded. Next, the data was put into matrices according to their color code. Data from observations, documents, and reflective notes were also analyzed in terms of these major themes.

## **Arts Coordination and Quality**

In response to research question two, finding three of the study is that arts teachers and leaders perceived that distributing arts coordination had a positive effect on the quality of the arts program. According to those interviewed, distributing arts coordination resulted in expanded opportunities for students, standards-focused curriculum, and arts-specific professional learning. In order to understand how distributed arts coordination impacted the quality of the arts program as a whole, I first considered how the interviewees defined quality in the arts. Then, I inquired what factors teachers

and leaders believed to affect the quality. After developing an understanding of how interviewees defined quality in the arts, I considered what effects distributing arts coordination into three levels had on the quality of the arts program.

**Expanded opportunities.** The interviewees characterized the overall quality of the arts program in the district as “good to great” and “great to excellent.” The common perception was that this rural district has fewer resources than larger school districts, yet they offered many arts opportunities and “did a lot with a little.” Expanded opportunities in the arts were outgrowths of the district leadership, arts leadership team, and disciplinary teams’ work. In music, for instance, the Elizabeth shared how many of her instruments came through grant funding, some she wrote herself, and many with district help. In addition, she shared how she was able to approach district leadership to purchase items beyond the school budget like replacement strings for her ukuleles. District leaders also provided time for elementary music teachers to meet and attend content-specific professional development. Because of the support of district leaders and the organization into disciplinary teams, professional learning opportunities were frequent. These professional learning opportunities often provided teachers with the knowledge and skills to implement standards-based curriculum using a variety of instruments and technological resources. In speaking about providing these opportunities, Gina said

We want them to be able to, you know, understand and experience lots of different instruments and genres of music and be able to appreciate and enjoy things that they don’t normally have experience with so they can enjoy music the rest of their lives.



This quote captures one of the goals of elementary music in this district. The school district leadership, arts leadership team, and arts disciplinary team supported the goal of providing more opportunities to students.

The elementary music lead teacher, Elizabeth, shared that she was working on expanding access to instruments in the district's elementary schools "where instruments aren't as accessible." As lead teacher, she was the point of contact with the district leader to acquire a new set of ukuleles for another elementary school in the district. Again, district financial support provided the means to purchase these instruments. The appointed lead teacher facilitated the purchase of these instruments. Without the established lines of communication resulting from the arts leadership team, she may not have been in the position to make such a request from the district leadership.

Visual arts teachers also cited increasing opportunities as a sign of a quality arts program. The lead teacher, Wendy, explained:

our visual art program has far more opportunities in art shows now than we ever did before. We have children being involved in programs more, because of the positive environments that have been created within those classrooms. So, great things are ahead. I mean, really, there are.

In visual arts, the teachers who were interviewed shared that the district has a healthy gifted and talented program. They explained how this program provides extended opportunities to students who excel in the arts and need to be challenged.

**Standards-driven curriculum.** A common theme among interviewees was that standards-driven curriculum and assessments were important to having a quality

program. Distributing arts coordination helped the district's art program become more standards-aligned. The district leader, Clara, specifically felt that having the distributed leadership structure and developing leadership capacity among the lead arts teachers helped build a cohesive arts program that was standards-driven. As reported earlier in the findings, lead teachers attended standards training and trained their disciplinary teams to implement new standards. The district leader was responsible for sending lead teachers to the state-led training these teachers likely would not have attended otherwise. In addition, as reported by interviewees, professional learning opportunities were aligned to the standards. Wendy stated, "PD was also standards-driven; I'm talking about techniques as well as standards. It's always, got to include the standards for it to be impactful." Not only did disciplinary teams receive arts-specific training, they collaborated in disciplinary teams to continuously improve the implementation of standards.

**Arts-specific professional development.** A final dimension of quality in this district is providing relevant professional learning opportunities. Lead and non-lead teachers spoke of how professional development opportunities affected the quality of their teaching. District leadership prioritized time for arts teachers to meet in their disciplines on professional development days. Lori explained the importance of professional learning opportunities stating, "Through professional development, there's a level of expectation set, and we try hard to meet that expectation." Teachers shared that the professional development opportunities are frequent, standards-driven, and give teachers knowledge and skills they can apply to their classroom immediately. Lori also shared that regular professional development in visual arts led to a refreshing of the

curriculum and “thereby affected the quality.” All levels of leadership were responsible for arts-specific professional development. District leadership supported PD with time and financial resources, members of the arts leadership team often facilitated professional learning, and the disciplinary team served as the unit for professional development.

### **Community Connections**

The fourth finding of the study is that through the arts coordination work of district leaders, the arts leadership team, and individual arts disciplinary teams, the art’s program established a presence in the community. The arts program’s presence in the community was most evident through planned programs and events held in community venues. In addition, there was evidence of mutually beneficial relationships between members of community organizations and the arts program.

**Presence in the community.** In interviews, teachers and leaders spoke of the importance of having a presence in the community as Gina stated, “I think we try to give them as many opportunities to share their abilities to the community. That builds confidence too. I can’t underestimate the value that.” Lori shared one way the visual arts had a presence stating, “We had three rotating easels so we could have artwork in the community.” This traveling exhibition went to locations around the community including local assisted living and retirement homes. That display included artwork from every school. In addition, all of the visual arts teachers displayed work downtown during the city’s fall and spring festivals. During the district-sponsored spring arts festival, work was also on display in downtown or in other community venues. These numerous art displays were made possible by the oversight of district leadership, the lead teacher, and

disciplinary team collaboration of the visual arts teachers. Often, the district leader coordinated dates, the lead arts teacher communicated with the group about the upcoming event and led discussion in disciplinary meetings to finalize details for the events. Interviewees reported that the visual arts team would divide up duties, where one may oversee publicity, while another would take care of logistics.

The elementary music teachers also worked to have a presence in the community. All of the elementary schools participated in the district arts festival performing out in the community either downtown, or more recently in a city venue. Elizabeth shared that she held a concert at a local shaved ice stand in conjunction with a school spirit night. The performing arts groups from the district also performed at such community events as the Christmas tree lighting held in December at the town park.

**Beneficial relationships.** The district's arts program and the surrounding community have sustained mutually beneficial relationships. They have worked together on several initiatives. For example, about eight years ago, the local library brought in a huge Smithsonian exhibit on "New Harmonies, Celebrating American Roots Music." An online news source documented this exhibition. In cooperation with the school district, the library allowed school field trips to view the exhibit. Every student in fourth and fifth grade was able to view and interact with this exhibit. For this event, the district leader coordinated the visits from schools including coordination of transportation and scheduling. Music teachers prepared students for the visit by teaching some of the background lessons related to the exhibit. A visual arts teacher also worked on occasion

with the local library. She conducted knitting lessons in the evening at the local library for her students and other community members. The library allowed her to use the space.

For eight successive years, the arts program partnered with a local church to provide an organ concert for all fourth graders in the district. I obtained recent e-mails from Elizabeth that provided evidence about this event. In the e-mail, I noted that a non-lead music teacher, Jim, seemed to be in charge of planning the event as he composed the e-mails. I confirmed my suspicions on a meeting agenda that specifically named Jim as the person in charge. The e-mails reveal the pathway that communication took to the assistant superintendent and other music teachers on the elementary team. This particular email was informing music teachers and the assistant superintendent of the need to change the date of the program to better align with 4<sup>th</sup> grade science standards.

There is other evidence of mutually beneficial relationships between the arts program and organizations in the community. At least four arts teachers from the district had been teachers at a fine arts camp held at a local church. As teachers, they were able to share their expertise in their arts area. The teachers have allowed the church to use musical equipment as needed to implement the camp curriculum, and likewise music teachers borrowed from the church's arts department. For instance, a music teacher borrowed castle scenery for a school program that was left over from a children's production at the church.

Another example of community and school district collaboration was a night of singing. The chorus department gave a concert sponsored by the Rotary Club. The local newspaper and online news organizations documented this event. Chorus groups from the

middle schools and high schools performed at the event. Tickets were sold, with the profits went directly to benefit the chorus program in the district. The performances offered an opportunity for the organization to spread the word about their work in the community and around the world, which was stated in the article. Likewise, it brought in people from the community to experience the chorus program in action. The newspaper included a quote from a Rotarian that mentioned how other communities had held similar events and made similar partnerships with local schools.

A final example of building community relationships was exemplified in a community arts drop-in hosted by the district about eight years ago and continuing for several subsequent years. This drop-in style event featured art displayed on easels and performances by the district's strings ensemble. The event was held in a local antique store. Lori shared that she was in charge of coming up with a list of addresses and names those who were invited that included school and community leaders, county leaders, and even some state leaders. In her words, "We created this opportunity because we needed our leaders and community to recognize our school arts position within our community." All arts teachers were encouraged to attend to have a chance to mingle with community and business leaders.

By distributing arts coordination into three levels, the district provided the infrastructure that arts teachers needed in order to have a presence in the community and establish beneficial relationships with the community. Leaders and teachers at each level played a role in planning events for the community and benefitted from relationships with members of the community.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the findings for my two research questions: *Question 1: How did one rural school district implement a distributed leadership model in order to coordinate its arts program?*; *Question 2: According to arts teachers and leaders, how did distributing arts coordination impact the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community?* I found that the district intentionally distributed arts leadership into different levels, which were district leadership, an arts leadership team, and arts disciplinary teams. I also found that the district leadership, arts leadership team, and disciplinary teams performed vital but differing roles in coordinating the program. District leadership served as the coordinator and provided infrastructure for arts teachers to meet; coordinated professional development; communicated important information to teachers, principals, and the community regarding the arts program; and provided additional resources to the arts program. The arts leadership team members acted as the communicators. They were intermediaries between the district leadership and arts teachers. In this role, they were central in communicating needs and concerns from the district office to arts teachers and from arts teachers to the district office. The final level of leadership, disciplinary teams, played active roles in coordinating the content area. These content specialists regularly met for professional development, planned special events, and engaged in collegial dialogue centered on various content specific topics. These activities facilitated the coordination of the arts program.

Another purpose of the study was to examine how distributing arts coordination impacted the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community. To answer

this question, I discovered that the distribution of arts coordination into three levels, district leadership, leadership team, and disciplinary teams, made a positive impact on the quality of the district's arts program and increased its presence in the community. By analyzing the data, I discovered that distributing arts coordination into the stated levels resulted in expanded opportunities for students, standards-focused curriculum, and arts-specific professional learning. In addition, the effective distribution of the arts coordination promoted connections to the community through special events and mutually beneficial relationships.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine how one rural school district implemented a distributed leadership model in order to coordinate its arts program. A focus of the research was to examine how the district involved different levels of leadership from the district to the school level in order to coordinate the program. In addition, the study also investigated the roles that different levels of leadership took related to arts coordination.

An additional purpose of the study was to examine how distributing arts coordination impacted the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community. This chapter includes a discussion of major findings as related to the literature presented in Chapter 2. The discussion is organized in the same fashion as the previous chapter, by findings. When appropriate, I also discuss the findings through my lived experience as a music educator and team leader in two different rural school districts. The next section of the chapter includes a discussion of the theoretical dimensions of the study distributed leadership and socio-cultural learning theory. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study, areas for future research, and a brief summary. This chapter includes discussion and future research recommendations related to the following two questions:

Question 1: How did one rural school district implement a distributed leadership model in order to coordinate its arts program?

Question 2: According to arts teachers and leaders, how did distributing arts coordination impact the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community?

### **Distributed Arts Leadership**

In this section, I reiterate finding one and analyze it in terms of the literature base. I found that the district intentionally distributed arts leadership into three levels which were the following: district leadership, an arts leadership team, and arts disciplinary teams. This finding aligns well with foundational principles from distributed leadership. Leithwood et al. (2007) described a characteristic of distributed leadership is a group of people from different levels, not just the top, working on direction-setting activities. As seen in the findings, this district had three distinct levels of leadership working on activities related to arts coordination. At the highest level there was a superintendent of curriculum and instruction. Next, there was an arts leadership team comprised of lead arts teachers. Lastly, there were arts disciplinary teams made of groups of arts educators. Later in this chapter, I discuss the roles each level of leadership took related to arts coordination and direction-setting. This finding also aligns to what we know about typical structure for arts coordination in smaller districts. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999) found that arts coordination duties tended to be assigned to a curriculum specialist and/or other arts educators. Harris (2008) also recognized that in a distributed leadership model "the key to success will be the way that leadership is facilitated, orchestrated and supported" (p. 173). In this district, the district leader was key in providing the infrastructure for these three levels to meet and operate. She facilitated arts leadership team meetings with lead

arts teachers and she reserved time for arts disciplinary teams to meet on PD days. From my experience as an arts educator, I know that arts teachers from different schools are not likely to meet together unless the infrastructure is put in place for them to do so. Most often they are required to attend non arts-specific PD at their own school. In this district, Clara shared a specific time she had to fight to allow arts teachers to be excused from a literacy training series in order to have their own content-specific PD. Following her advice and with the support of the assistant superintendent above her, the district excused teachers from that specific training. Henceforth, district leadership has made it a priority for arts teachers to have ongoing content specific training.

District leadership actions align to Harris' (2008) and Leithwood et al.'s (2007) finding that successful distributed leadership depended on formal leaders to extend leadership responsibilities to different members of the organization. Not only were structures implemented to physically bring different groups together, a structure for communication was implemented. The arts leadership team acted as intermediaries between arts teachers in their areas and the district leader. The district leader tasked lead arts teachers with communicating with their team, getting feedback, and reciprocating the information. The physical meetings and the pathways of communication that were put in place helped to bridge gaps between the different levels of leadership. The infrastructure they provided helped to combat typical challenges to implementing distributed leadership that Harris (2008) identified: distance, culture, and structure. Donovan and Brown (2017) found that creating rural networks enhanced professional development and

communication. In this district, the distributed leadership model enabled that network to thrive.

### **Roles in Arts Coordination**

The district leadership, arts leadership team, and disciplinary teams played important but differing roles in coordinating the arts program. The disciplinary team was most prolific in performing actions related to coordinating their individual content area. I will discuss how the findings relate to the literature base using the headings district leadership, arts leadership team, and arts disciplinary teams.

**District leadership.** The district leader acted as the coordinator of the arts program. In this district, they acted as the face of the arts program in the school district and the surrounding community. Their oversight of the program provided the infrastructure to establish the other levels of leadership. They also provided continuous support through the provision of resources and time.

Two different superintendents of curriculum and instruction oversaw the arts program as part of the instructional program for the past 12 years. During some of that time, there was an intermediary district leader who assisted the assistant superintendent with arts coordination, though she had no authority over the arts. As was stated prior, in a small school district, arts leadership is often placed under the umbrella of a district leader who may or may not be an arts teacher (President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, 1999). The literature stated that one of the strategies for increasing access to the arts is to place a coordinator high in the district office (Bodilly et al, 2008). Though the assistant superintendents were not full-time arts

coordinators, they played a crucial role in developing the infrastructure to support arts coordination throughout the district. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership, (1999) found that arts coordinators acted to implement and sustain a cohesive systemic arts program. In this district, the leader took steps to build a cohesive arts program. Primarily, the district leader provided the infrastructure for the leadership team and arts disciplinary teams to meet; coordinated professional development opportunities; communicated important information to teachers, principals, and the community regarding the arts program; and provided extra resources beyond school budgets. Acting in this capacity, district leadership provided consistent support for the arts program. The district leader also found additional resources to support the arts program, such as from grants and other programs. This finding is in line with the research by Donovan and Brown (2017). These researchers found that the creative use and acquisition of resources is a strategy for increasing access in rural arts programs.

The district leader also acted as the spokesperson for the arts. The interviewees reported that the district leader communicated with principals about matters pertaining to the arts. Ben, the principal confirmed this fact in his interview. The district leaders also made statements to the news agencies about the importance of the arts programs as part of advertising different upcoming events. The President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education Partnership (1999) found that arts coordinators typically are most responsible for nurturing support for the arts in the community. By providing overarching infrastructure and support, the district leader fulfilled the role of coordinator.

**Arts leadership team.** Members of the arts leadership team served to connect communication between the district leader and the arts teachers in their respective disciplines. Therefore, they may be termed, the communicators. Acting as intermediaries, lead arts teachers on this team interpreted important information and conveyed it to the district leader and/or to their respective disciplinary teams. The arts leadership team was a structure that supported coordination of the arts program, mostly by establishing pathways of communication. Harris (2008) found that one of the keys to distributed leadership is how leaders provide supporting and facilitating structures. The arts leadership team was a supporting structure that aided communication between the district leader and the fine arts teachers. Instead of the district leader communicating with all the art teachers about initiatives and special events, the lead teachers were given that responsibility. With the support of the communicators, the district could better accomplish tasks related to the arts program: alignment of the curriculum and teaching to the standards, planning for special events, and communicating state and district initiatives.

The establishment of the arts leadership team gave select lead arts teachers the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities. Researchers Honig (2012) and Klar (2012) found that formal leaders can take specific actions to improve instructional and leadership capacity in principals and department chairs. In the role of lead teachers, the arts teachers were, in effect, acting as department chairs. The district leader afforded the lead arts teachers opportunities to lead their respective arts area by leading meetings and facilitating communication. This finding is in line with other research, since Klar (2012)

found that educational leaders can take actions to develop leaders by providing an environment that includes opportunities to learn and lead. Lead arts teachers were also sent to receive professional development and required to share what they learned with the group, as was the case with training on the new standards.

**Arts disciplinary teams.** In this section, I review the major findings related to the roles of arts disciplinary team members and analyze the findings in light of the research. Through thematic analysis, I found that the arts disciplinary teams regularly met for professional development, planning special events, and engaging in collegial dialogue centered on various content specific topics. Since most of the work of arts disciplinary teams centered on their specific arts area, I gave them the name of content specialists. In this case, the district leaders during the past 12 years were not certified in the arts. The content experts, instead, resided at the lower level, consisting of the arts teachers. The lead teachers had two roles, communicators and the content specialists. Non-lead teachers as well as lead teachers played an active role on disciplinary teams. From the interviews and document collection, I found that non-lead teachers took on planning special events and leading initiatives for their arts area. This finding aligns to research on a distributed leadership model, which is that people from different levels not, just the top are participating in activities that set the direction of the organization (Leithwood et al., 2007). Since the top leadership level was not certified in the arts, it is especially important to note that the distributed leadership structure in this district allowed the teachers to have a voice in setting the direction of the organization.

Arts disciplinary team members performed vital roles related to arts coordination: leading professional learning, planning and coordinating special events, and engaging in collegial discussions. In a school district with a full-time arts coordinator, these responsibilities are often handled at the top, by the highest leadership level. However, in this rural school district, arts teachers did most of the work within the structure of the arts disciplinary team.

*Professional learning.* The district leadership provided regular PD days for elementary music and visual arts teachers to meet within their disciplinary team. I noted three patterns for professional development: bringing in specialists, having district art teachers lead training, and sending the entire group to PD. What is significant about the professional learning for teachers is that there was an infrastructure to provide it on a regular basis and it was content-specific. By providing such frequent and varied professional development, the district developed their teachers' expertise in their arts area.

Interviewees indicated how valuable their professional development time had been to their professional lives. In their rurally-focused study, Donovan and Brown (2017) found that professional development served to unite teachers and sustain them, making them more likely to stay in the profession. Arts teachers were also given opportunities to lead training, which helped to build their leadership capacity. As is common practice in distributed leadership models, this district developed their people (Leithwood et al., 2007). I found that teachers in the district participated in PD in their local district and they attended state conferences. This finding is in line with Donovan



and Brown (2017), who also found that sites participated in local and regional professional development opportunities. In my experience, districts that do not have a structure to provide content-specific PD require their arts teachers to attend school-based PD that is often unrelated to their content. In such cases, teachers are not nurtured as professionals, and they may become stagnant in their field. Further, teachers in such districts often feel unsupported by their districts.

*Planning district-wide events.* The arts disciplinary team members were actively involved in planning and enacting district-wide events. In larger school districts, the arts coordinator likely would have taken the lead on such initiatives, but in this district, the members of the disciplinary team took the lead. For the district-wide arts festival, for instance, one teacher handled publicity, another handled the scheduling of performances, and one coordinated the visual art display. In this case, leadership responsibilities were extended by the district leader to other members of the organization, which is typical in a distributed leadership structure (Harris, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2007).

*Collegial discussions.* Members of arts disciplinary teams engaged in collegial discussions centered on a variety of content related topics. The district provided the infrastructure for arts teachers to meet and have beneficial discussions surrounding standards, curriculum, and other content-specific concerns. This finding aligns well to Abril and Bannerman (2015) who found that connecting the school level to the district level through coordination with other music teachers had a positive effect on music programs. In fact, besides interaction within the school, the district networking of music

teachers is one of two factors that positively affected teachers' professional lives, the other being the state and/or national music standards (Abril & Bannerman, 2015). In the cited study, general music teachers reported that they received instructional and curriculum support through the interactions with other music teachers at district-wide meetings. The researchers found that "creating opportunities for face-to face- interactions with colleagues at the district level emerged as an effective course of action for curriculum and instruction benefits but also for program maintenance and advocacy" (Abril & Bannerman, p. 356). Providing this structure for teachers to meet helped to overcome one of the challenges of implementing distributed leadership, geographic separation (Harris, 2008). Instead, the district provided a structure to enable collaboration between arts teachers from different schools.

The arts disciplinary teams in this district functioned as communities of practice (Wenger et al., 2002). The arts teachers were grouped within their discipline, met regularly to deepen their expertise on their content, and engaged around content-specific problems or issues. They also created new tools and documents to guide their work. For example, many years ago, the visual arts teachers developed a district-wide curriculum. More recently, the music teachers begin working on a standards-based skills checklist to use in their elementary music classrooms to help better align their programs and prepare students for middle school music. They created shared knowledge and it came about through their interactions as members of the same community (Wenger et al., 2002).

## Program Quality and Community Connections

In the next section of this chapter, I analyze the findings related to question two: According to arts teachers and leaders, how did distributing arts coordination impact the quality of the arts program and its relationship to the community? First, I present these findings in table form (see Tables 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3). Secondly, I analyze these findings in terms of the research organized topically by findings three and four, respectively, quality in the arts and community connections.

Table 5.1

### *District Leadership Actions and their Connections to Quality and Community*

<b>Leadership Level</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Connections to Quality</b>	<b>Community Connections</b>
District leadership	Facilitated the writing of grants for arts programs	Expanded opportunities through grant funding	
	Facilitated ongoing content-specific PD	PD provided knowledge and skills to implement standards-based curriculum	
	Sent lead teachers to state-led standards training	Lead teachers, followed by all teachers were trained on new standards	
	Served as spokesperson for the arts in the community		Communicated important arts news to the community

Table 5.2

*Arts Leadership Team Actions and Connections to Quality and Community*

<b>Leadership Level</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Connections to Quality</b>	<b>Community Connections</b>
Arts leadership team	Attended standards training and other content-specific PD	Led standards-based PD for their arts disciplinary team	Communication aided the implementation of special events in the community
	Connected communication between the district leader and other arts teachers	Established pathways of communication built a cohesive program	

Table 5.3

*Arts Disciplinary Team Actions and Connections to Quality and Community*

<b>Leadership Level</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Connections to Quality</b>	<b>Community Connections</b>
Arts disciplinary teams	Planned and executed special events	Increased students' opportunities to perform and showcase work	Increased presence of the arts program in the community through art displays and performances
	Coordinated with members of the community to provide special programs	Increased opportunities for students	Developed relationships with community organizations
	Participated in ongoing collegial discussions related to curriculum, standards, current events, and concerns	Collaborative discussions resulted in better alignment of curriculum to standards and expanded opportunities for students	Discussions facilitated the planning and carrying out of special arts events in the community

**Quality in the arts.** Finding three from the study is that arts teachers and leaders perceived that distributing arts coordination had a positive effect on the quality of the arts program. The data showed that distributing arts coordination resulted in expanded opportunities for students, standards-focused curriculum, and arts-specific professional

learning. In this district, the teachers' perceptions were that the school offered many arts opportunities, and that this was a sign of quality program. In relationship to the literature, this finding is not unusual since Bodilly et al. (2008) found that study sites emphasized improved access more than quality.

Another finding was that distributing arts coordination helped the arts program become more standards-focused. The way the district provided standards training demonstrates this finding. District leadership sent lead arts teachers to trainings on the new arts standards. Then, these teachers returned and trained their arts disciplinary teams. The district already had the infrastructure in place to pass along information and properly train all members of the arts team. Interviewees also reported that in disciplinary teams they worked on developing and refining curriculum. Arts researchers have found that standards-based curriculum is part of a quality program (Baxley et al., 2014) and aligning curriculum to standards is a strategy to improve the quality of an arts program (Bodilly et al., 2008). In my experience, arts teachers often have a great deal of independence in their curriculum. Therefore, to implement a high-quality curriculum systemically is difficult. Providing relevant PD and many opportunities for teachers to develop and refine curriculum is an important step in providing a high-quality curriculum, system-wide.

Arts researchers also found strategic planning to be a strategy for improving the quality of an arts program (Bodilly et al., 2008). Further, Seidel et al., (2009) found the alignment of the vision to the goals for the program to be vital to a quality program. These findings highlight what was missing in this district. I found no evidence of a strategic arts plan. Though this district coordinated leadership and collaborated within

disciplinary teams, there was no evidence of collaboration between different arts disciplinary teams to develop program goals. The absence of cross-team collaboration is worth noting since Fisher (2007) found “collaboration is hard to achieve when divisions of that team rarely come together to discuss comprehensive arts issues, policies, and vision for their school or district” (p. 26). However, this district already has the infrastructure in place to undergo a strategic planning process if it chooses to do so in the future.

The quality of the arts program was amplified through the provision of arts-specific professional development. These learning opportunities were frequent and facilitated by all levels of leadership. At times, the district leader appointed arts teachers to attend training. At other times, she provided extra resources to attend trainings. Arts leadership team members often led training for their arts disciplinary teams or facilitated communications to bring in specialists. Professional learning was provided at the disciplinary arts team level on an average of three to four times a year.

The district’s actions demonstrated that the development of teachers was a priority and providing ongoing professional learning positively impacted the quality of the program. This finding aligns with research from Donovan and Brown (2017) who found that professional development was a key strategy used in rural school districts concerned with quality. The finding also aligns to Bodilly et al.’s research (2008) which stated that building the capacity of all people involved in the arts was a strategy used to improve the quality of the program. These findings are of note and align with what I have experienced. In districts that do not provide arts-specific professional learning, teachers

inconsistently get it on their own. In other words, some teachers will seek out conferences and go at their own expense. Other teachers may go for years without attending any arts-specific PD. I have personally observed both types of teachers and there is marked difference in the quality between the two. As Bodilly et al. (2008) and Donovan and Brown (2017) found, providing professional learning and developing capacity is a key strategy in developing a quality program.

The infrastructure of leadership in this school district created opportunities for arts teachers to communicate and collaborate in planning and learning. Communication and collaboration was particularly prominent within the structure of the arts disciplinary team. Interviewees reported on the valuable discussion they had related to curriculum and the high expectations they had for the program. These discussions were ultimately related to increasing the quality of the program. This finding is notable since Seidel et al. (2009) found that having discussions about what constitutes quality is a sign of a quality program. Further, out of the dialogue, new beliefs and philosophies may emerge about what makes a quality program (Seidel et al., 2009).

**Community connections.** *Finding 4* is that through the arts coordination work of district leadership, the arts leadership team, and individual arts disciplinary teams, the art's program established a presence and built mutually beneficial relationships with members of the community. The arts teachers collaborated within their arts disciplinary teams in order to have a presence in the community. They partnered with people in the community to provide art and music events for their students and members of the community. Leaders and teachers at each leadership level played a role in planning



special community events. Further, the arts program benefitted from relationships between leaders and teachers and members of the community. This finding connects well to what we know about quality arts programs in the South. Baxley et al. (2014) found that relationships were important across the board, from classrooms to the community. Rural researchers Donovan and Brown (2017) also found that developing relationships and using placemaking strategies to be effective in improving access to the arts in a rural areas.

### **Theoretical Conclusions**

**Distributed perspective.** The findings from the study aligned well to the main tenets of the distributed perspective (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). The assistant superintendent acted as the formal leader over the arts program, while arts teachers in all areas were informal leaders. All of the teachers interviewed had performed leadership roles at some point or another, whether they had been an official lead teacher or not. The practice aspect emphasizes that leadership unfolds at the interaction level (Spillane & Coldren, 2011). This distribution of arts coordination was facilitated by interactions between leaders and teachers. The district leader provided the infrastructure to facilitate interactions between arts teachers in order to accomplish tasks related to the coordination of the arts. The situation of leadership includes organizational routines and materials that facilitate interactions between people (Spillane & Diamond, 2016). Organizational routines and tools frame how people interact. In this district, clear organizational routines were established that established the situation of leadership. Regular meetings between arts disciplinary teams were one organizational routine that was established.

Communication pathways between the district leaders and arts leadership team members are another organizational structure that framed the situation of leadership. Also, data showed that arts teachers regularly interacted around materials such as the standards and curriculum. The tools were central to the work of arts disciplinary teams.

Spillane and Coldren (2011) described three ways leadership tends to be distributed: by design, default, or in crisis. The findings show that in this district related to coordinating the arts program, leadership was distributed by design and default. The district leader appointed arts teachers to be leads over their disciplinary team and gave them the responsibility of communicating with their team and facilitating regular meetings with them. From the data, there was also evidence that teachers led by default especially at the arts-disciplinary team level. Teachers often stepped to take on lead roles in planning different special events. For example, one teacher reported that she stepped up to handle publicity for the district-wide arts festival when she realized no one else had done it. This example also demonstrates the premise that in a distributed leadership theory all people in an organization have a potential to lead, though all do not lead. (Harris, 2008).

Bolden (2011) found that different configurations of distributed leadership are enacted in different contexts. The distributed leadership frameworks of Gronn (2002) and Spillane (2006) center on the interpersonal interactions and collaboration that result in shared outcomes (Bolden, 2011). Gronn's (2002) work can be applied to this study to bring greater clarity to understand how this district distributed leadership. Gronn (2002) identified three forms of distributed leadership: spontaneous collaboration, intuitive

working relations, and institutionalized practice. The first type of distributed leadership is when a group of people with different skills get together to solve a problem and then disband. In this study, there was no evidence to suggest this type of distributed leadership.

The second form, intuitive working relations, centers on personal relationships. Over time, people working together form close working relationships, in which, “leadership is manifest in the shared role space encompassed by their partnership” (Gronn, 2002, p. 430). In this partnership, members work together as a unit within a shared framework of understanding. In this study, the arts disciplinary teams showed evidence of this type of distributed leadership. Members of the visual arts and elementary music disciplinary teams routinely collaborated to plan and execute special arts events and engage in collegial discussions. Their work in teams resulted in the development of shared understanding of their curriculum and their roles in carrying out various arts event’s in the community. Different members of the team emerged as leaders of different initiatives. I also collected evidence to confirm the nature of their relationships. Gina described team members working relationships as “close,” saying they had contact with each other on a routine basis. Lori reported that the visual arts teachers regularly texted each other to work out details of arts displays and they got together outside of school hours. These work partnerships were more than spontaneous instances of collaboration. They were ongoing working partnerships, wherein leadership manifests between the interactions of the team.

Gronn's (2002) final form of distributed leadership is institutionalized practice. This form includes formal structures of distributed leadership. These formal structures can occur by either design or adaptations. An example of a formal structure by design is a leadership team "headed by a first among equals" (Gronn, 2002, p. 430). An example of a structural adaptation is a manager who transforms a temporary work unit into a continuing formal structure of the organization (Gronn, 2002). The distributed leadership in this district can be categorized as institutionalized practice. Finding one was that the district intentionally distributed arts leadership into three levels, which were the following: district leadership, an arts leadership team, and arts disciplinary teams. The overall structure of leadership into three levels was intentionally designed to provide arts coordination in the absence of a full-time arts coordinator. The middle level, the arts leadership team, is a prime example of a formally designed distributed leadership structure. The lead teachers that comprised that team acted as a first among their peers. The arts disciplinary teams was also a formalized structure that met on an ongoing basis. The leadership interactions therein were central to the coordination of the arts. In this district, ongoing formalized structures facilitated the coordination of the arts. Therefore, the type of distributed leadership that was enacted in this district could be categorized as institutionalized practice according to Gronn's (2002) framework.

**Sociocultural learning theory.** Besides applying distributed leadership frameworks to the data, it is useful to apply principles from sociocultural learning theory to better understand the nature of social interactions of teachers within the arts disciplinary team. The arts disciplinary teams that were studied, functioned as

communities of practice as defined by Wenger et al.'s (2002) definition. These groups met within their discipline on an ongoing basis. In meetings, teachers interacted around problems and tasks related to their common work.

To understand the work of these communities of practice and how they facilitated arts coordination, I adopt the sociocultural learning perspective explained by Renshaw (2003) to be a view of learners as historical and cultural members operating within a web of social activities. The teachers within the disciplinary team unit engaged in social activities that were fundamental to their individual learning and the learning of the organization. From interview data, I found teachers engaged in collegial interactions that included formal professional development, formal and informal conversations about content-related concerns, and discussion related to planning arts events. These interactions within the disciplinary team often resulted in the creation of new tools such as curriculum guides or checklists. Participation in the arts disciplinary team as a COP enabled members to “develop flexible knowledge structures that facilitate problem solving and transfer in new situations” (Grabinger et al., 2007, p. 4). In this way, the social interactions of the COP resulted in organizational learning, which ultimately facilitated the coordination of the arts program. Using the sociocultural learning theory as lens highlights the importance of bringing arts teachers together in COPs instead of merely providing isolated professional learning opportunities. Using this theory also complements my understanding of distributed leadership. According to Spillane and Coldren (2011) understanding leadership practice begins at the interaction level and is

framed by the situation. According to sociocultural learning theory, it is also the web of social activities and, the interactions therein, that facilitate learning.

### **Practical Implications**

The results of the study suggest that rural school districts, or ones without full-time coordinators, can provide effective arts coordination by thoughtfully distributing leadership. Such districts must consider how best to distribute leadership into different levels taking into consideration their own context. They should also consider carefully the roles of leaders, teachers, and teacher-leaders at each level. In this district, the overarching roles at each level were the coordinator, the communicator, and the content expert. In this context, these roles were logical since the coordinator was not arts certified. Therefore, the district leader did not play an active role in the coordination of individual art content areas. Instead, the arts disciplinary team members were the content experts.

In a school district that employs an arts-certified coordinator, leadership roles and leadership levels would likely need to be adjusted. Such an individual would likely have content expertise. Thus, he or she would likely take a more active role in coordinating the individual art content areas. In smaller districts with fewer overall arts teachers, district leaders also might have to consider other configurations for communities of practices besides arts disciplinary teams. They might even need to partner with another rural school to form a meaningful team that could function as a COP. A successful rural leader is able to adapt their leadership practices to suit the context (Goldring et al., 2008; Harris, 2002).

Therefore, decisions about how to distribute leadership and the various roles of teachers and leaders at each level should be made according to their specific context.

There are some broad principles that emerge from the study that may apply regardless of the context. The distribution of arts coordination in this district hinged on the support and infrastructure provided by the district leader. Therefore, an important first step is ensuring the arts program has a district level leader who has the authority to act on the behalf of arts teachers and the arts program. As coordinator, this person must be a spokesperson and advocate for the arts in the district and the community. The other levels of leadership can only be established with the support of a district leader.

Secondly, the designated district leader must provide the infrastructure to establish the different levels of leadership. The infrastructure should be designed to bring the arts people together through effective communication and collaboration in order to plan and learn. By providing ongoing formal structures for collaboration, a district can develop a form of distributed leadership termed by Gronn (2002) as institutionalized practice. This type of distributed leadership is recommended since it proved to withstand the turnover of district leaders and arts teachers.

Another important component of arts coordination is communication. In this district, the middle level, the arts leadership team, acted as chief communicators. They served to bridge the gaps between the district leader and the arts teachers in their area. If implementing a distributed leadership structure, then a district, should consider how to connect communication between different levels of leadership. Again, each district must consider their own context when considering a plan for communication.

Another practical implication of the findings is that rural districts that wish to coordinate their arts program should consider organizing their arts teachers into communities of practice. In this district, organizing into disciplinary teams worked well. In smaller districts, where there are fewer arts teachers, another grouping of teachers might be more beneficial. The important thing is to provide a social infrastructure for teachers to engage in ongoing interactions related to their content area, including professional development and collegial discussions. The interactions within the COP are crucial to the learning of arts teachers and the organization. By forming communities of practice, the arts disciplinary teams became a vehicle by which arts teachers were transformed into content specialists.

Another practical implication of the study is that distributing arts coordination may have a positive effect on the quality of the program and its relationship to the community. The infrastructure that was put in place established communication pathways and closed the distance between arts teachers, giving them an opportunity to collaborate on standards-driven curriculum, planning events, collegial discussions, and community initiatives. The infrastructure also aided the implementation of content-specific professional learning for arts teachers, which impacted the quality of the program.

The results of this study and principles related to distributed leadership may apply to the leadership of other content areas as well. A similar model may be especially effective when a district leader is coordinating on a part-time basis and is coordinating a subject in which they are not certified. In such cases, a leadership model that relies on teachers as content experts is desirable. These teachers have the knowledge and



experience to coordinate their content areas. However, they need the supportive infrastructure to do so systemically. A coordinator, even a part-time one, can provide the supportive infrastructure needed to bring teachers together to collaborate, learn, and lead in their subject area.

### **Future Research**

There remains little research related to coordinating arts programs in rural school districts. This study offers a first glimpse at how one rural district coordinated its arts program using a distributed leadership structure. This study primarily focused on the perspectives of arts teachers and leaders in the district. An expanded study could more deeply explore the roles of principals and community members in supporting the leadership of arts programs in rural school districts. This study took a broad look at how different levels of leadership were involved in coordinating the arts program. A future study could zero in on one level of leadership involved in distributed arts coordination, to bring clarity to the roles. For instance, researchers could study the interactions between arts teachers and leaders at the disciplinary team level to gain a better understanding of how their interactions shape the practice of leading the arts program. To increase generalizability, this study could also be redesigned as a multiple-case study or comparative case study and include a larger sample of school districts.

### **Conclusion**

If school districts desire to develop and maintain a quality arts programs, research suggests the importance of having an arts coordinator at the district level (Bodilly et al., 2008; President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities and Arts Education

Partnership, 1999). Hiring a full-time arts coordinator is often not feasible in a rural school district. Instead, rural districts often distribute arts coordination between different district leaders and/or arts teachers. The effectiveness of this tactic may depend on how the leadership is supported and structured (Harris, 2008). In this study, I found that the district intentionally distributed arts coordination into different leadership levels beginning at the district level and extending to the arts teachers. The leadership levels were district leadership, arts leadership team comprised of lead arts teachers, and arts disciplinary teams. These three levels worked in harmony to bridge gaps between arts teachers and leaders, bringing them together in collegial interactions. These social interactions were fundamental to the learning of arts teachers and the organization, and they facilitated the coordination of the arts.

The findings from this study provide several important takeaways. A district level leader must provide the infrastructure and ongoing support in order to establish an arts leadership team and arts disciplinary teams. Therefore, having someone at the top is vital to the success of distributing arts coordination. Between the district leadership level and the arts teachers, the leadership team served a vital role, to bridge communications between the two levels. The most unexpected finding was how actively arts disciplinary teams carried out arts coordination duties for their content area. Operating as a community of practice, arts teachers engaged in professional development, planned special events, and made curriculum improvements. Lead arts teachers and non-lead arts teachers spearheaded these activities. This finding suggests the importance of investing in the arts disciplinary team as structure to support arts teachers and arts coordination.

District leadership should consider investing in teams by consistently providing time to meet on PD days and engage in content-specific learning opportunities. District leaders should also encourage team members to take on leadership roles.

Another important finding is that distributing arts coordination had a positive effect on the quality of the arts program. The data showed that distributing arts coordination resulted in expanded opportunities for students, standards-focused curriculum, and arts-specific professional learning. Distributing arts coordination also impacted the relationship of the arts program and the community. With the infrastructure in place, arts teachers were able to communicate and collaborate on joint initiatives with the community.

The pattern of leadership distribution in this district may not be effective in every setting. As the rural school leadership literature emphasizes, it is important for leaders to be attentive to their unique context, and adapt practices to suit it (Budge, 2006; Preston & Barnes, 2017, Preston et al., 2013). Likewise, arts researchers found a context-responsive approach to arts education to be a strategy to increase access to arts programs in rural school districts (Donovan & Brown, 2017). The findings from this study should be understood within their unique context. However, the underlying principles can be adapted to suit other contexts.

The intentional distribution of arts coordination into different levels helped to minimize the isolation of arts teachers and build a higher quality, more cohesive program. Regardless of the size and location of their school district, all students can benefit from involvement in a quality arts program. Providing coordination through a distributed

leadership structure is an important step in making this ideal a reality, especially in a rural context.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A: Interview Materials

### A-1 Interview Protocol Matrix

Source	Concept/s	Interview Question
Bevan (2014)	‘...to examine a person’s particular experience a researcher must consider the context and biography from which the experience gains meaning’ (p. 146).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How long have you been teaching/administrating the arts?</li> <li>2. What do you like most about teaching/administrating the fine arts in your district?</li> </ol>
Leithwood, Mascal, Strauss, Sacks, Memmon, and Yashkina (2007)	‘Our evidence seems to be telling us that planful and aligned forms of distributed leadership are unlikely in the absence of focused leadership on the part of the school’s formal leader. Planfully aligned leadership distribution depends on the establishment of facilitating structures...’ (p. 55).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. How does the district provide leadership to the arts program?</li> <li>4. Can you describe the structure and make-up of the leadership team?</li> <li>5. What is the primary function or role of the arts leadership team in this district?</li> <li>6. How often does the team meet?</li> <li>7. When was the arts leadership team established?</li> <li>8. How was the leadership team appointed?</li> <li>9. What is your role on the leadership team?</li> </ol>
Klar (2012)	<p>Educational leaders can take actions to develop leaders by providing an environment that includes opportunities to learn and lead (Klar, 2012).</p> <p>‘Stoll and Bolam (2005)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Has the district taken any steps to develop leaders in the arts? If so, what are those steps?</li> <li>11. Has the district provided you any</li> </ol>

	<p>suggested that capacity building involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Creating and maintaining the necessary conditions, culture and structures</li> <li>▪ Facilitating learning and skill-oriented experiences and opportunities.</li> <li>▪ Ensuring interrelationships and synergy between all the component parts' (p.179).</li> </ul>	<p>learning experiences that have helped you develop as a leader? For example, they put you in charge of planning an event, etc. If so, describe your experiences.</p> <p>12. Have the team members had any formal training in arts leadership? If so, can you tell me about their training?</p>
Stoll and Bolam (2005) and Louis et al. (2010)	Building capacity involves providing an environment that supports continuous learning (Stoll & Bolam, 2005) and intellectual stimulation (Louis, et al., 2010).	<p>13. What learning opportunities does the district provide to arts teachers?</p> <p>14. Describe how the district provides learning opportunities (PLC, staff development days, etc.)</p>
President's Committee (1999)	An added dimension of professional development for arts teachers is developing the teacher as artist.	15. Does the district encourage you to continue to develop as an artist? If yes, describe how they encourage your development.
Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, and Palmer, (2009)	'Achieving quality involves an ongoing examination of programmatic as well as personal purposes and values, along with a continual examination of what is actually happening in the room.' (p. 88)	16. What do you think are the successes of the district's fine arts program? Can you give me an example?

Donovan and Brown, (2017)	Professional development is a strategy utilized to increase access to and /or quality of arts programs.	17. Do you think professional development of arts teachers impacts the quality of the fine arts program? If so, in what ways does it influence the quality?
Bodilly, Augustine, and Zakaras (2008)	‘Sites also used strategies to improve quality: strategic planning; requiring alignment with state standards; developing curriculum supports; building individual and organizational capacity; qualifying providers; coordinating peer review, ranking, and modeling; and assessing student learning’ (pp. 74-75).	18. Do you think developing arts leaders impacts the quality of the fine arts program in the district? If so, in what ways?
Seidel, Tishman, Winner, Hetland, and Palmer, (2009)	‘Achieving quality involves an ongoing examination of programmatic as well as personal purposes and values, along with a continual examination of what is actually happening in the room.’ (p. 88)	19. In terms of quality, what are some goals for the arts program?
Spillane and Coldren (2011)	Spillane and Coldren (2011) explained that the distributed perspective focuses attention on “how leadership practice takes place in leaders’ interactions with other leaders and with followers and how the practice of	20. Do you interact with the other members of the arts leadership team? If so, describe your interactions. (Who, what, why, when, and where do you interact?) 21. Do you interact with other arts teachers in your



	leading and emerges in and through these interactions” (p. 31).	same subject area? If so, describe the interactions in terms of who, what, why, when, and where do you interact.
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## Appendix A-2

### Interview Protocol

#### **Opening Comments**

I will thank the participant for their participation in the research, review consent forms, and assure their confidentiality. Next, I will explain the interview process and that they will have the opportunity to check my transcripts for accuracy.

#### **Opening Questions**

1. How long have you been teaching/ administrating the arts?
2. What do you like most about teaching/administrating the fine arts in your district?

#### **Leadership Structure**

3. How does the district provide leadership to the arts program?
4. Can you describe the structure and make-up of the leadership team?
5. What is the primary function or role of the arts leadership team in this district?
6. How often does the team meet?
7. When was the arts leadership team established?
8. How was the leadership team appointed?
9. What is your role on the leadership team?

#### **Leadership Capacity**

10. Has the district taken any steps to develop leaders in the arts? If so, what are those steps?
11. Has the district provided you any learning experiences that have helped you develop as a leader? For example, have they put you in charge of planning an event, etc. If so, describe your experiences.
12. Have the team members had any formal training in arts leadership? If so, can you tell me about their training?

#### **Professional Learning**

13. What learning opportunities has the district provided to arts teachers?
14. Describe how the district provides learning opportunities (Professional Learning Communities, staff development days, etc.)
15. Does the district encourage you to continue to develop as an artist? If yes, describe how they encourage your development.

#### **Quality in the Arts**

16. What do you think are the successes of the district's fine arts program? Can you give me an example?
17. Do you think professional development of arts teachers impacts the quality of the fine arts program. If so, in what ways does it influence the quality?
18. Do you think developing arts leaders impacts the quality of the fine arts program in the district? If so, in what ways?
19. In terms of quality, what are some goals for the arts program?

### **Leadership Interactions**

20. Do you interact with the other members of the arts leadership team? If so, describe your interactions. (Who, what, why, when, and where do you interact?)
21. Do you interact with other arts teachers in your same subject area? If so, describe the interactions in terms of who, what, why, when, and where do you interact.

## Appendix B

### Observation Materials

#### B-1 Observation Sources

Background Information: Description of Participants	In distributed leadership models, formal leaders extend leadership responsibilities to other members of the organization (Harris, 2008, Leithwood et al., 2007). Therefore, it is important to document information about the participants and their role in the meeting or event. The role they assume may provide evidence of their leadership role in the arts program.
Overview of the meeting/event	“Assuming that the phenomena of interest have not been purely historical, some relevant behaviors or environmental conditions will be available for observation. Such observations serve as a another source of evidence in a case study” (Yin, 2009, p. 109)
Main purpose of meeting/event	I need to document the main purpose of the meeting or event in order to gain corroborating information. “Again, a reasonable approach is to corroborate interview data with information from other sources” (Yin, 2009, p. 109)
Activities and Materials	This section of the observation protocol provides a place to note activities and materials utilized in the meeting or event. Identifying and describing the activities and materials will help me understand the purpose of the meeting/event and relate it to program improvement. The checklist may help me identify strategies the district used, which are in common with the literature base. Bodilly et al. (2008) found that sites used common strategies to improve the quality of

	<p>arts programs in their districts. These strategies included the alignment of curriculum to state standards, developing curriculum frameworks, improving individual and organizational capacity, and peer mentoring and review. While Seidel et al. (2009) found that quality presented itself through four different lenses: learning, pedagogy, community dynamics, and environment.</p>
<p>Description of the interactions between participants</p>	<p>Spillane and Coldren (2011) explained that the distributed perspective focuses attention on “how leadership practice takes place in leaders’ interactions with other leaders and with followers and how the practice of leading and managing emerges in and through these interactions” (p. 31). Making note of these interactions may provide insight into the leadership practices that facilitates the coordination of arts leadership in the district.</p>
<p>Additional Information</p>	<p>“Observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied” (Yin, 2009, p. 110). This last section provides space to record other information relevant to answering my research questions.</p>

Appendix B-2  
Observation Protocol

**Background Information**

Date of observation: \_\_\_\_\_ Meeting or event observed: \_\_\_\_\_

Place: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Participants:

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**Meeting Content**

I. Overview of the meeting/event

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II. What is the main purpose of this meeting/event?

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III. Activities and Materials

A. Check all that apply and describe as needed:

\_\_\_ Print materials- Agenda

\_\_\_ Hands-on materials

\_\_\_ Technology/audio-visual resources- Power Point

\_\_\_ Other

B. Activities and Materials relate to:

\_\_\_ Standards Implementation

\_\_\_ Curriculum

\_\_\_ Grants

\_\_\_ Special Events                      \_\_\_ Other

Describe the above as needed:

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IV. Describe the interactions between participants:

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V. Additional Information

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